A Virtual Summit on Addressing and Eliminating the Attendance Gap

November 12, 2015

Virtual Summit Co-Sponsors

Welcome!

Dr. John B. King Jr.

Senior Advisor,
Delegated Duties of
Deputy Secretary of
Education

United States Department of Education

United Way Worldwide

Eric Glaser

Director
U.S. Network Impact

United Way Worldwide

Agenda

1. **Every Student Every Day**
2. **What Works to Reduce Chronic Absence**

   Hedy Chang and Robert Balfanz
3. **Panel Discussion**
   - Chris Caruso, New York City Department of Education
   - Teresa Neal, Grand Rapids Public Schools
   - Mike Herrmann, Tennessee State Department of Education
4. **Resources and Announcements**

Poll Question

What type of organization do you work for?

- ❑ Elementary school
- ❑ Secondary school
- ❑ School district
- ❑ Nonprofit agency
- ❑ Mayor's office
- ❑ State agency
- ❑ Funder (foundation, local United Way)
- ❑ Technical assistance provider
- ❑ Other

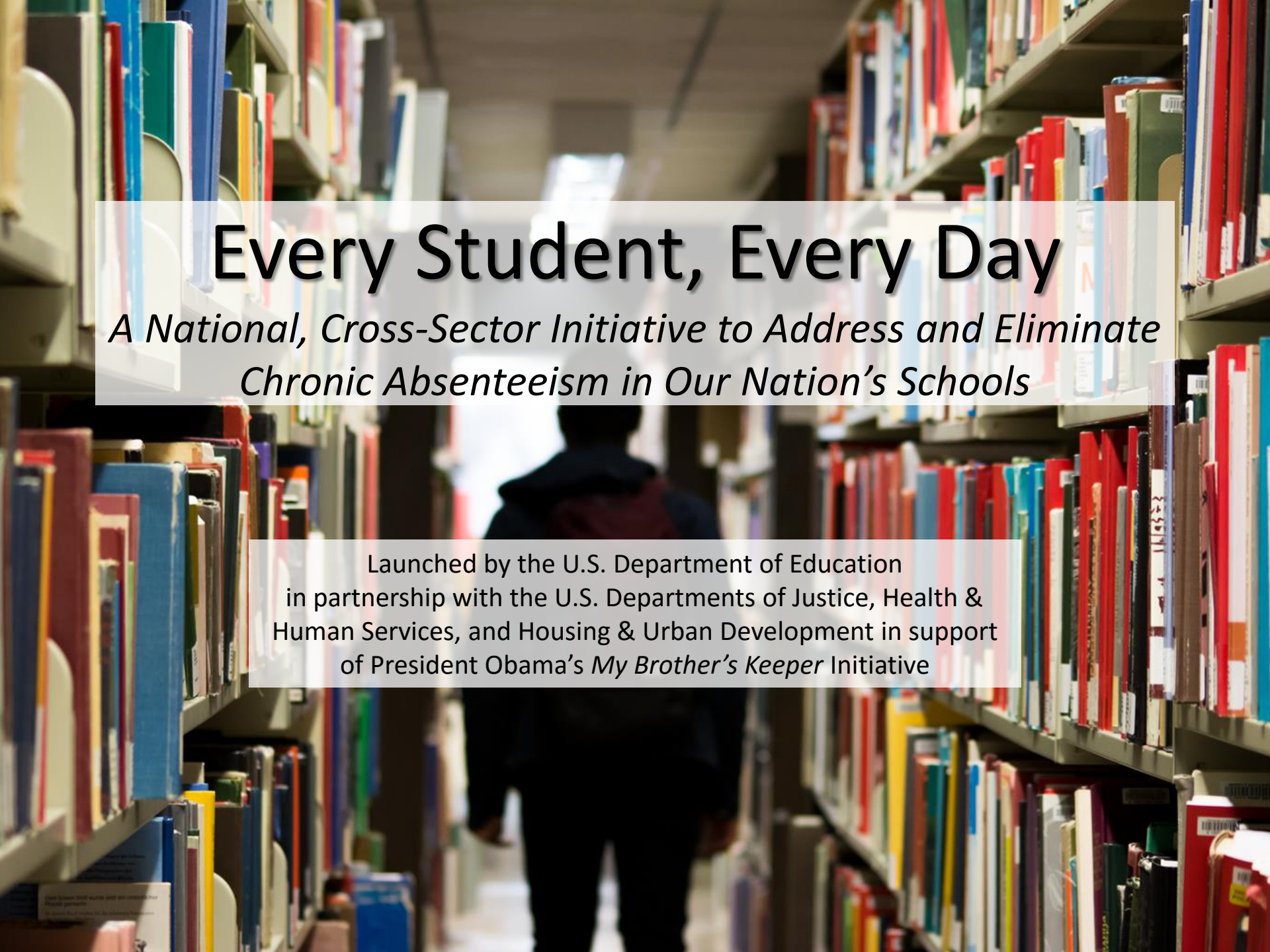
U.S. Department of Education

Leslie Cornfeld

Special Advisor to the Secretary of Education and Director, Office of Strategic Partnerships

Joaquin Tamayo

Special Assistant, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

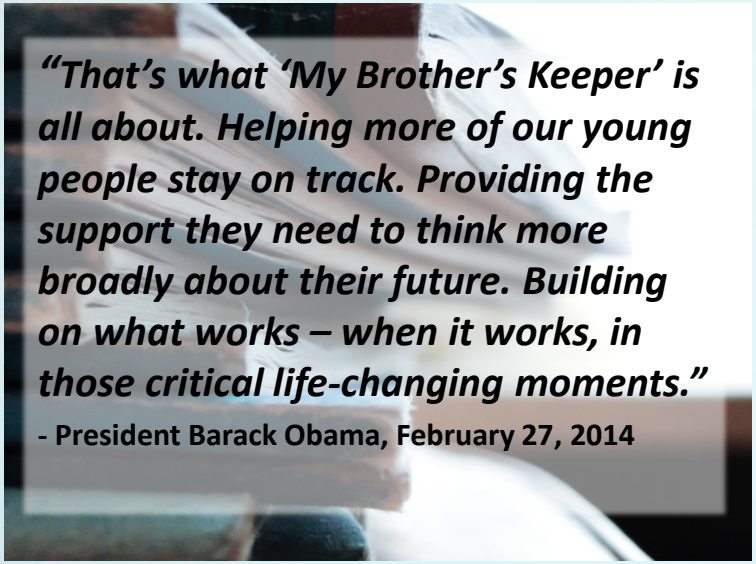


Every Student, Every Day

A National, Cross-Sector Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism in Our Nation's Schools

Launched by the U.S. Department of Education
in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Justice, Health & Human Services, and Housing & Urban Development in support of President Obama's *My Brother's Keeper* Initiative

My Brother's Keeper Initiative



In response to the President's call to action to improve the lives of all young people through the My Brother's Keeper Initiative (MBK), the Obama Administration launched ***Every Student, Every Day: A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism.***

As part of the MBK initiative, the Administration is announcing new steps to combat chronic absenteeism and calling on states and local communities across the country to join in taking immediate action to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism by at least 10 percent each year, beginning in the current school year (2015-16).

Chronic absenteeism—or missing at least 10 percent of school days in a school year for any reason, excused or unexcused—is a primary cause of low academic achievement and a powerful predictor of those students who may eventually drop out of school.

Every Student, Every Day Launch

On October 7, 2015, Education Secretary Arne Duncan, Acting Deputy Secretary John King, HUD Secretary Julian Castro, and White House Cabinet Secretary Broderick Johnson launched ***Every Student, Every Day*** at Patterson Elementary School in Washington, DC.

Over the last school year, **Patterson reduced its chronic absenteeism rate by almost half**, thanks to a cross-sector, community-wide approach to supporting students and families.

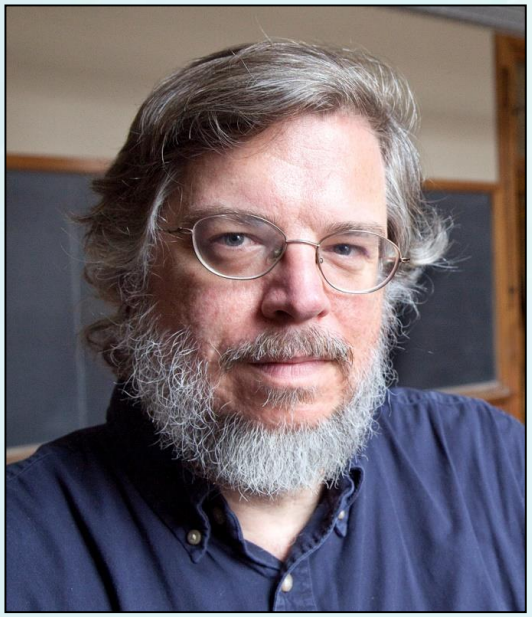
The participating federal officials called on the nation to follow Patterson's lead and **reduce chronic absenteeism by at least 10% each year.**

Every Student, Every Day Resource Package

The federal resource package for ***Every Student, Every Day*** includes:

- "Dear Colleague" letter with guidance for states, schools, and local communities
- ***Every Student, Every Day*** community toolkit
- ***Every Student, Every Day*** Virtual Summit on Nov. 12
- National awareness campaign sponsored by ED, the Ad Council, and the Mott Foundation, beginning in January 2016
- Launch of My Brother's Keeper **School Success Mentor Initiative** in January 2016
- Technical assistance for states and school districts beginning in January 2016
- National chronic absenteeism summit in Spring 2016
- Civil Rights Data Collection release of first-ever national chronic absenteeism data in Spring 2016
- ED.gov webpage on ***Every Student, Every Day***: http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/index.html

What Works to Reduce Chronic Absence?



Robert Balfanz

Everyone Graduates Center
Johns Hopkins University

Hedy Chang

Director
Attendance Works

What This Presentation Provides

- **What Chronic Absenteeism is**, why it matters, and its scale and scope
- **What evidence and experience shows** can be done to reduce chronic absenteeism with access to tools that can help
- **How school districts and communities can engage** in a comprehensive approach to combat chronic absenteeism and through it increase student success

Unpacking Attendance Terms

Average Daily Attendance

- **How many students show up to school every day?** The % of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in some states for allocating funding.

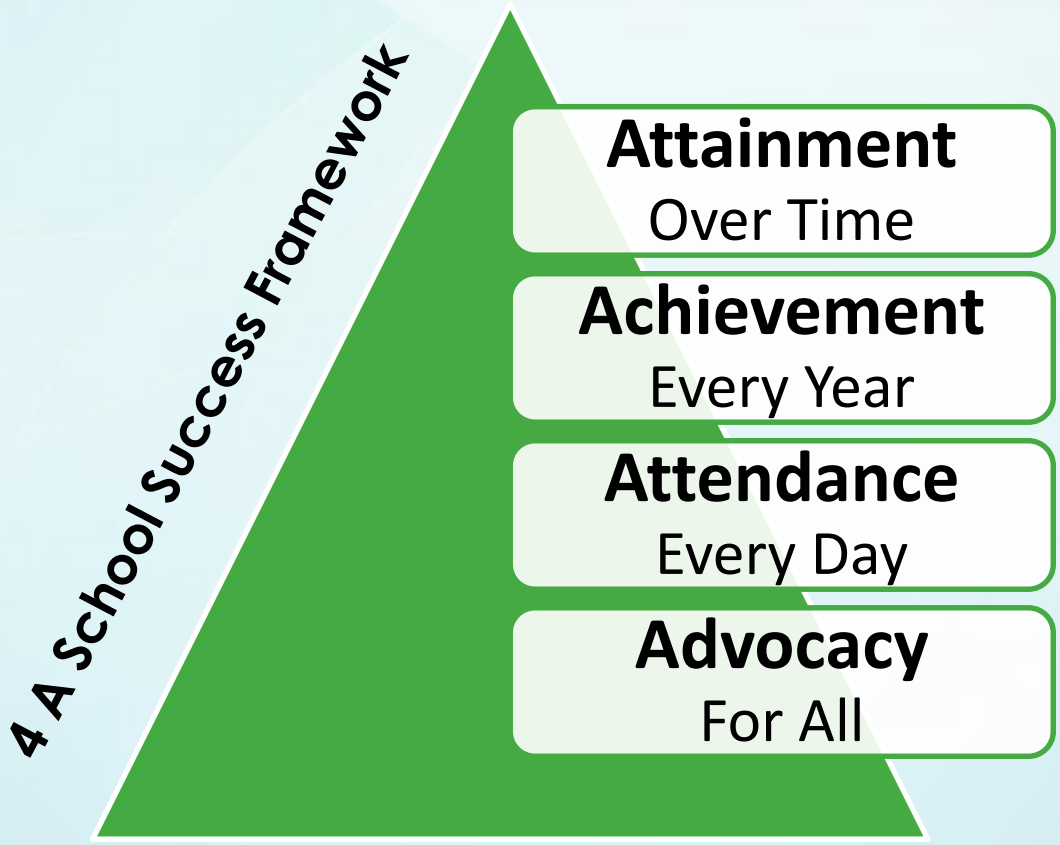
Truancy

- **Who is missing school without permission?** Typically refers only to unexcused absences and the definition various considerably across the country. Each state has the authority to define what is truancy and when does it trigger legal intervention.

Chronic Absence

- **Who is missing so much school they are academically at risk?** Broadly means missing to much school for any reason – excused, unexcused, etc. Researchers commonly define it as missing 10% of school.

Why Does Attendance Matter?



Developed by Annie E. Casey Foundation & America's Promise Alliance
For more info go to http://www.americaspromise.org/parent-engagement-toolkit

Chronic Early Absence Connected to 3rd Grade-Level Reading

Chronic absence in kindergarten

Lower levels of literacy in first grade

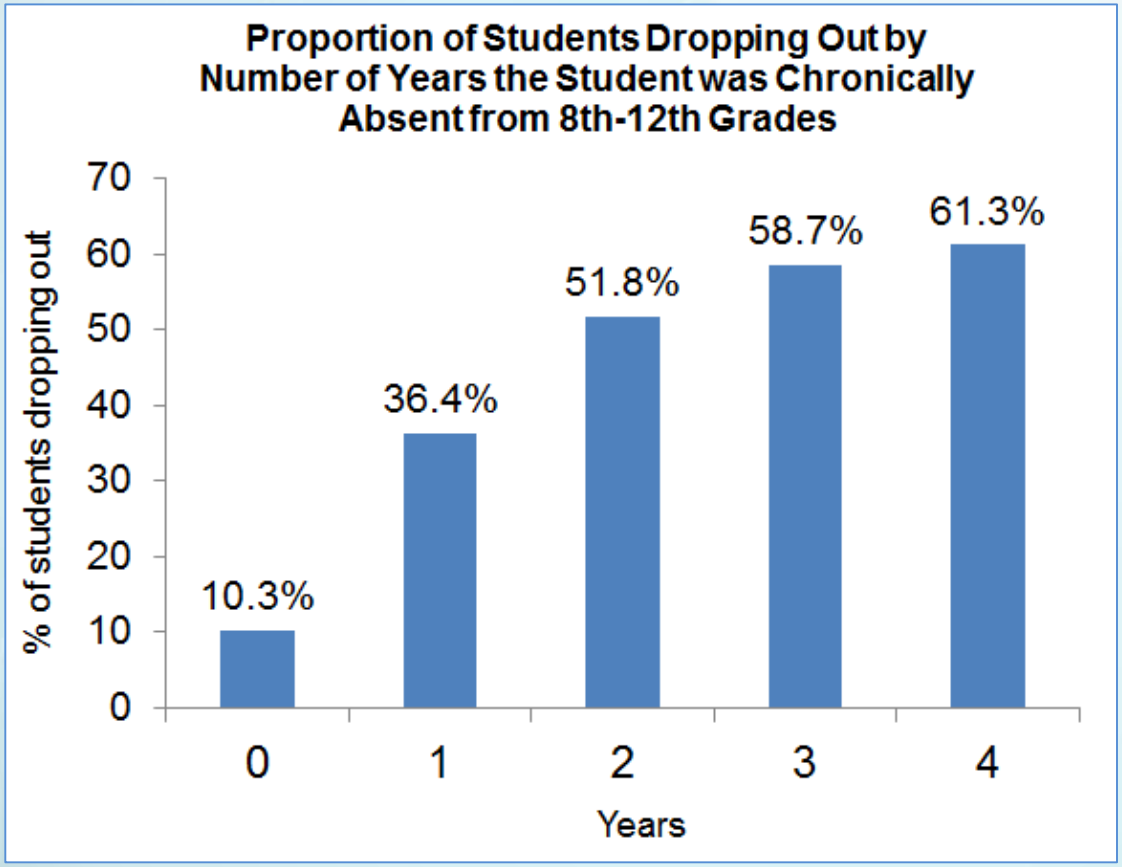
Lower achievement as far out as fifth grade

A Rhode Island Data Hub analysis found that compared to kindergartners who attend regularly, those chronically absent:

- **Scored 20% lower in reading and math in later grades and gap grows**
- **2x as likely to be retained in grade.**
- **2x likely to be suspended by the end of 7th grade.**
- **Likely to continue being chronically absent**

http://ridatahub.org/datastories/chronic-absenteeism-in-kindergarten/1/

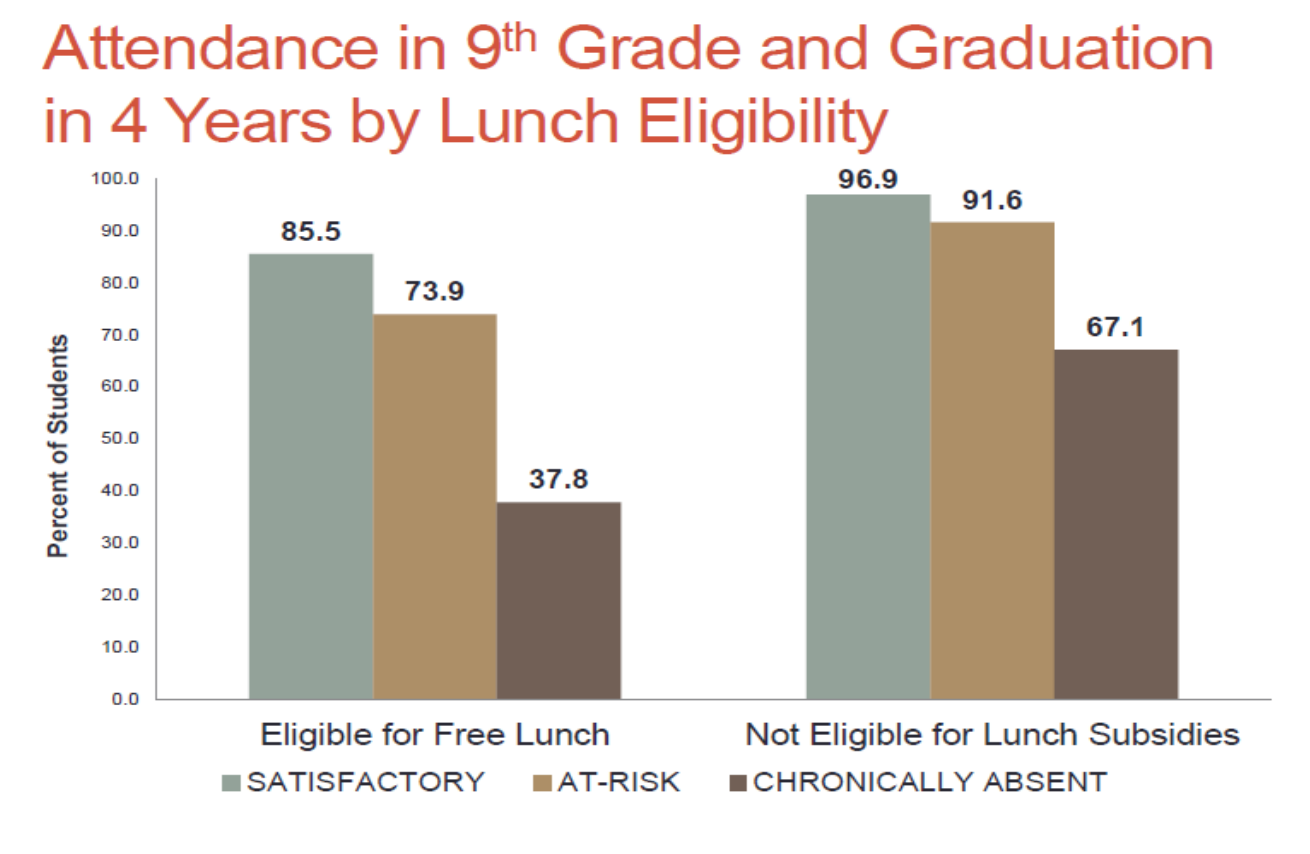
The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative



With every year of chronic absenteeism, a higher percentage of students dropped out of school.

http://www.utahdataalliance.org/downloads/ChronicAbsenteeismResearchBrief.pdf

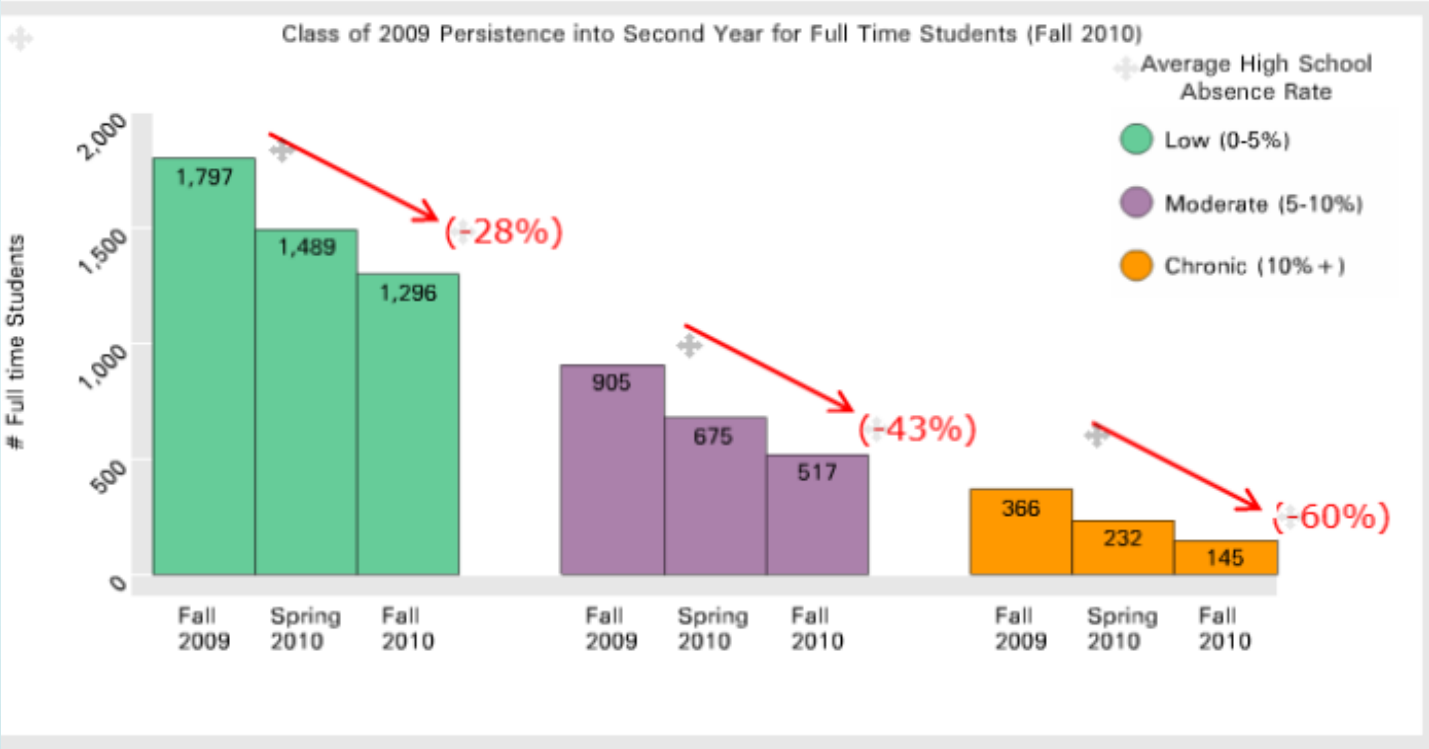
Attendance Is Even More Important for Graduation for Students In Poverty



Presentation to The Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap November 7, 2013, CT State DOE

Chronic Absence in High School Predicts Lower College Participation

In Rhode Island, only 11% of chronically absent high school students persisted into a 2nd year of college vs. 51% of those with low absences.



Rhode Island Data Hub: May 2014

Poll

Do you know the chronic absence rate for your school, district or state?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Not sure

How Can You Know Whether Chronic Absence is a Problem?

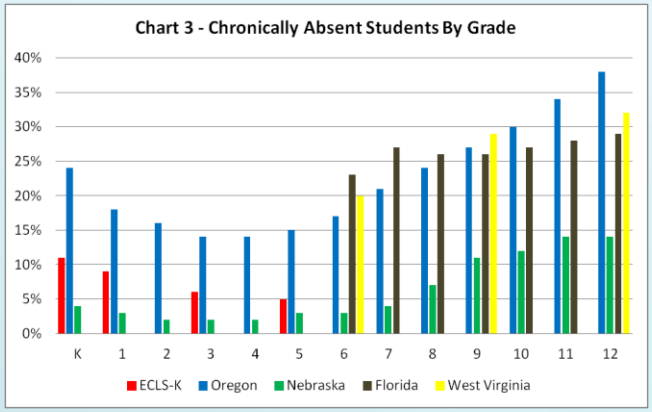
OCR release will offer you a general sense of the challenge! U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights data will be released Spring 2016 and will show how many students in each school missed 15 or more days of school.

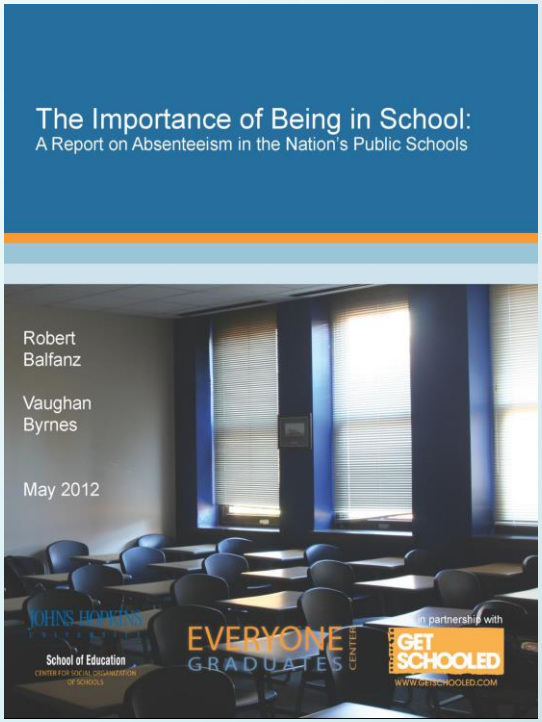
Calculate rates, ideally by school, grade and sub-population: If needed, take advantage of Attendance Works' free District Attendance Tracking Tools (DATT) and School Attendance Tracking Tools (SATT).

http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/tools-for-calculating-chronic-absence/

How Big of a Problem is Chronic Absence?

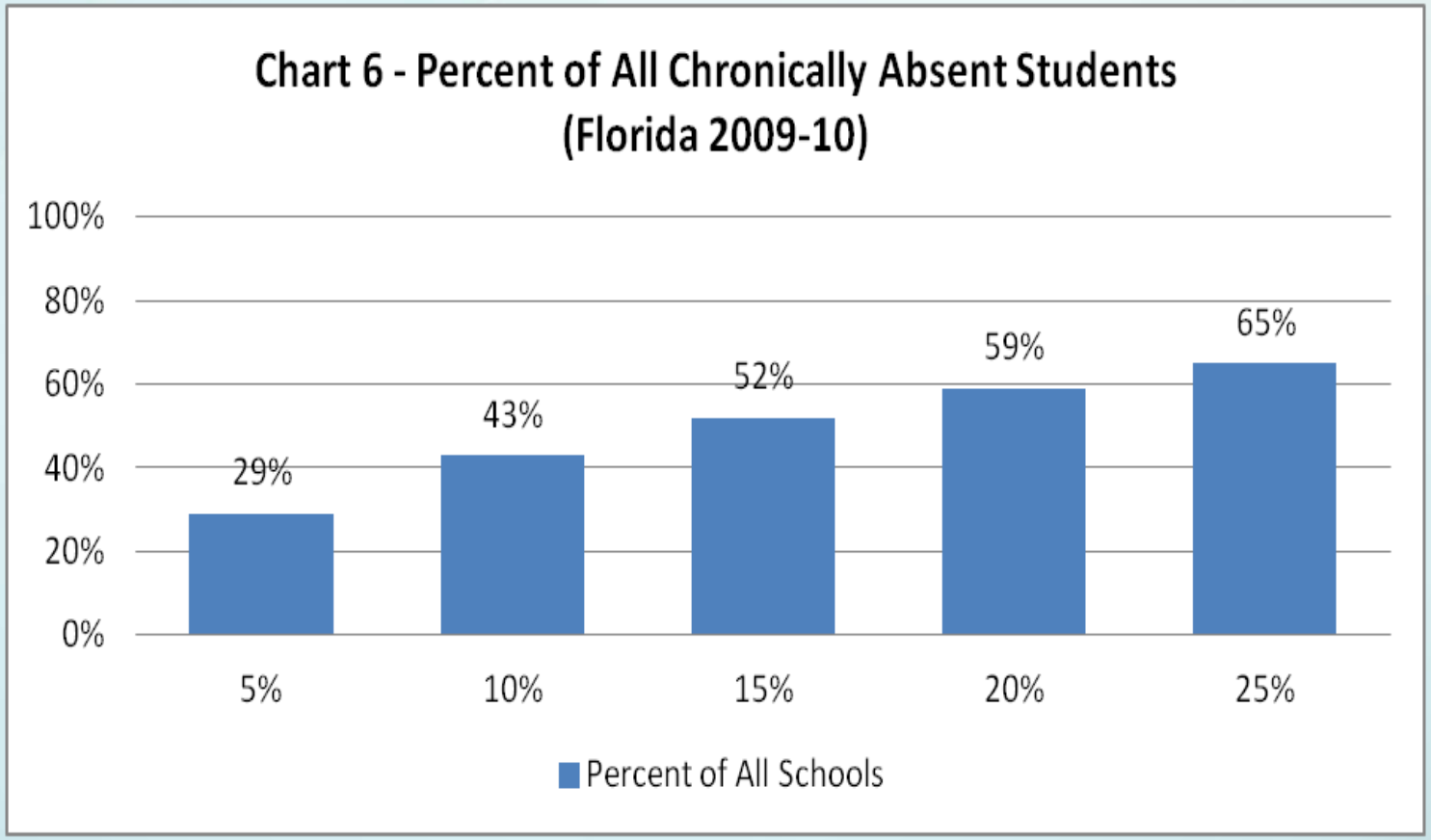
- Affects approximately 1 out of 10, or 7.5 million students nationwide.
- It is higher than 1 out of 3 students in some communities.
- It affects our youngest students as well as those in middle and high school.





http://new.every1graduates.org/the-importance-of-being-in-school/

High Rates of Chronic Absenteeism are Concentrated in Sub-Sets of Schools



What is the Magnitude at the Most Impacted Schools?

Maryland 2010-2011
Number of Schools with Large Numbers of Students Chronically Absent

Chronically Absent Students	50 or more	100 or more	500 or more	Greatest Number
Elementary	58	3	NA	137
Middle School		26	NA	152

Chronically Absent Students	100 or more	250 or more	500 or more	Greatest Number
High School	161	61	12	807

For Many Students in High Poverty Schools, Chronic Absenteeism is Chronic

Table 3 – History of Chronic Absenteeism for 6th and 9th grade students who were chronically absent (CA) in 2012-13 in NYC Schools with above average rates of Chronic Absenteeism

	Never CA in three prior years	CA in one of three prior years	CA in two of three prior years	CA in all three prior years
6th graders	27%	19%	23%	31%
9th graders	18%	17%	23%	43%

Significant Numbers of Students Can Miss Enormous Amounts of Schooling Over Time

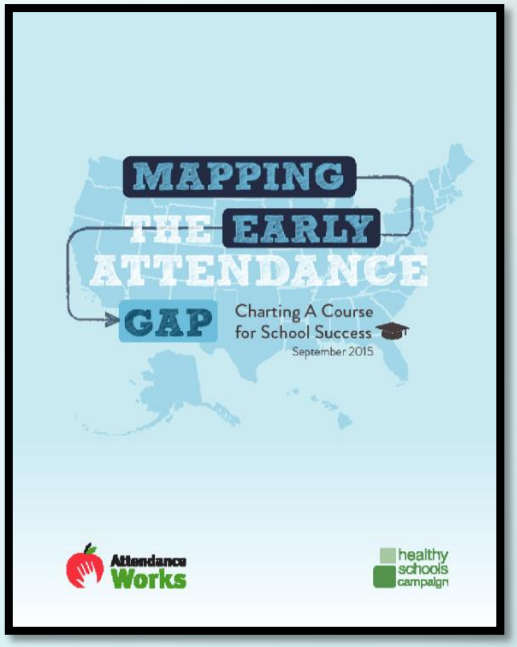
Florida 6th Grade Cohort
Cumulative Days Absent Over Seven Years of Middle and High School by Quintile

	Mean Number of Days Absent	Means Days Absent Per Year
Top 20%	13	3
Upper Middle 20%	35	6
Middle 20%	58	9
Lower Middle 20%	90	15
Bottom 20%	171	28

Who is Most Affected By Chronic Absenteeism?

(NAEP data)

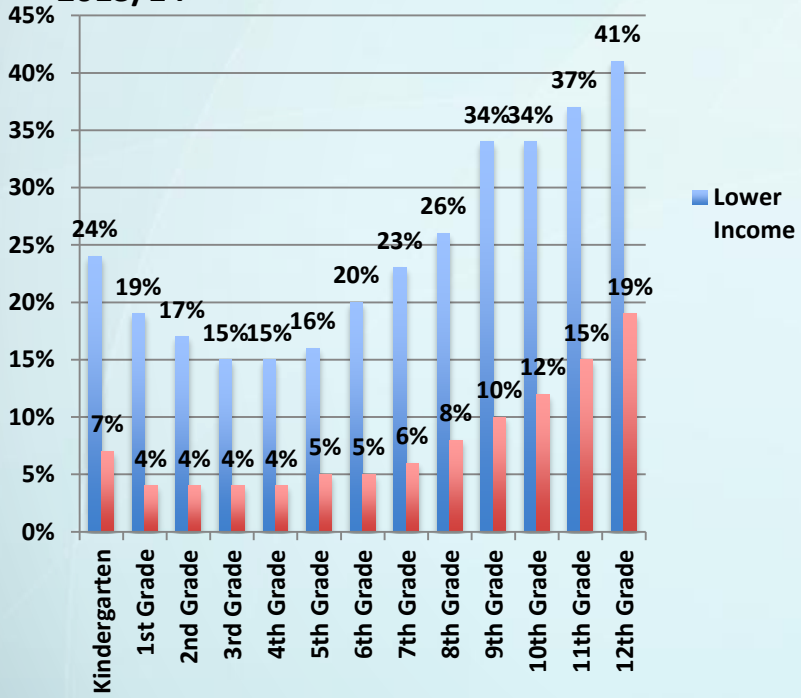
- **Low-income students** have higher rates of absenteeism in every state
- **American Indians** have the highest rates of all racial/ethnic groups
- **Black children** have higher rates than white students, particularly in some states
- **Hispanic students** have higher rates that white students particularly in some states
- **Students with disabilities** have significantly higher rates than others



http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/mapping-the-gap/

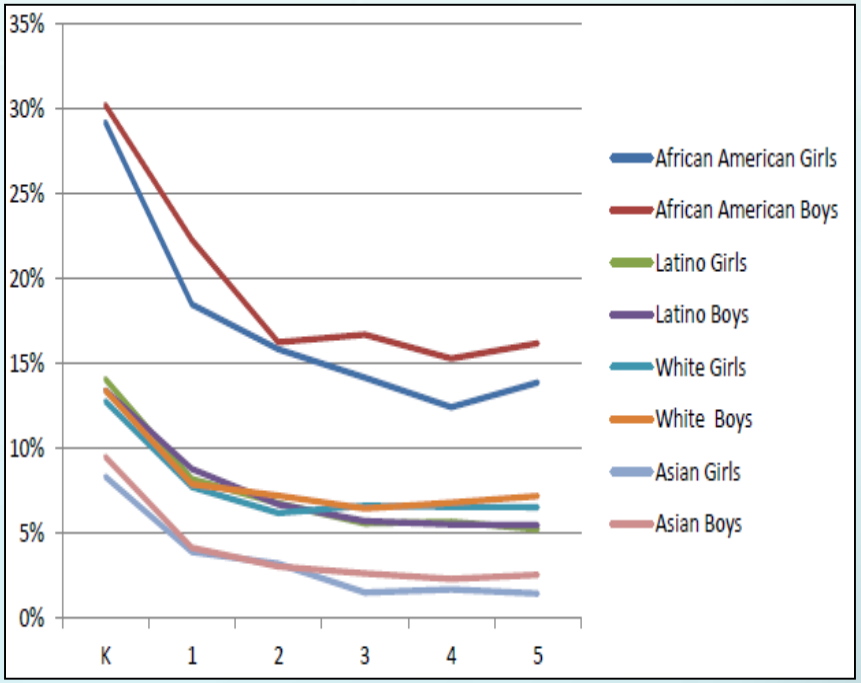
Among Vulnerable Populations, Chronic Absence Happens Earlier

Nearly a quarter of low income kindergartners are chronically absent in Rhode Island in 2013/14



Source: http://ridatahub.org/datastories/chronic-absenteeism-in-kindergarten/1/

In Calif., nearly 30% of African American kindergartners were chronically Absent in 2014-15



Source: In School + On Track 2015, Office of Attorney General Kamala Harris.

What Contributes to Chronic Absence?

Myths

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- OK to miss a day here or there
- Attendance only matters in later grades
- PreK and K is seen as day care not learning

Barriers

- Chronic disease (asthma) or lack of health/dental care
- Caring for siblings or other family members
- Unmet basic needs: transp., housing, food clothes, etc.
- Trauma
- No safe path to school
- High suspension rates

Aversion

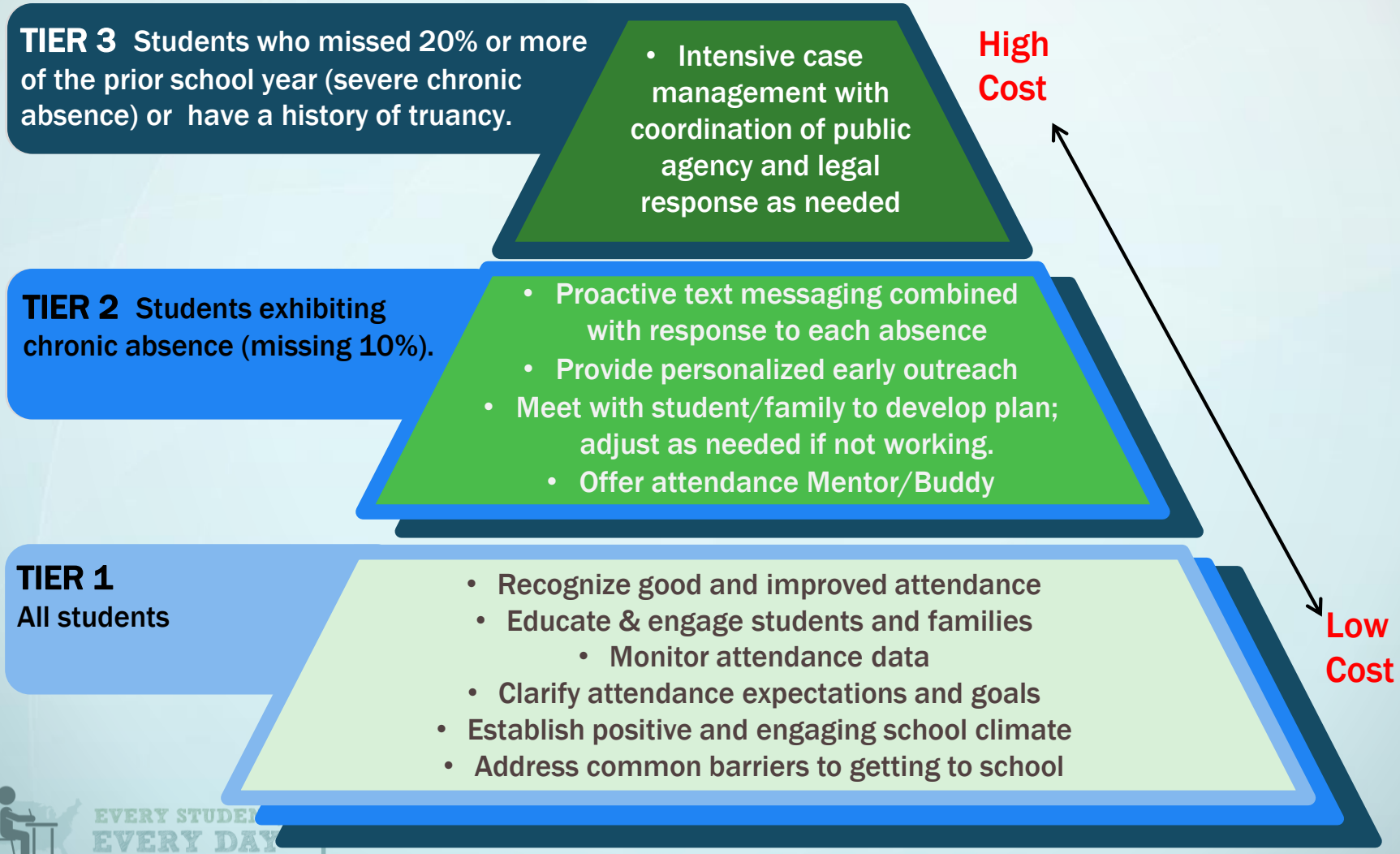
- Academic struggles
- Being teased or bullied
- Poor school climate, disproportionate school discipline, or unsafe school
- Parents had negative school experience

Disengage-ment

- Lack of engaging and relevant instruction
- No meaningful relationships with adults in school
- More exciting to be with peers out of school vs. in school

What Contributes to Chronic Absence?

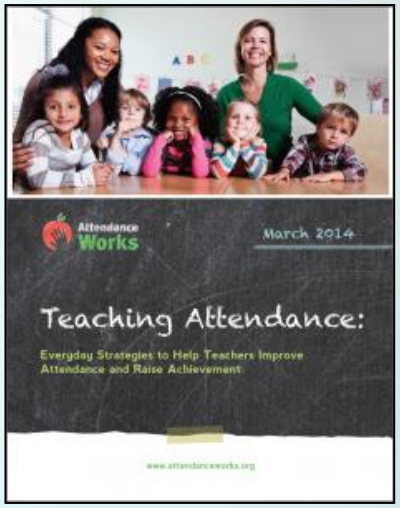
Lack of Multi-Tiered and Multi-Sector Response



Tier 1: Creating a Positive, Engaging School Climate that Explicitly Supports Attendance

Attendance is higher when schools:

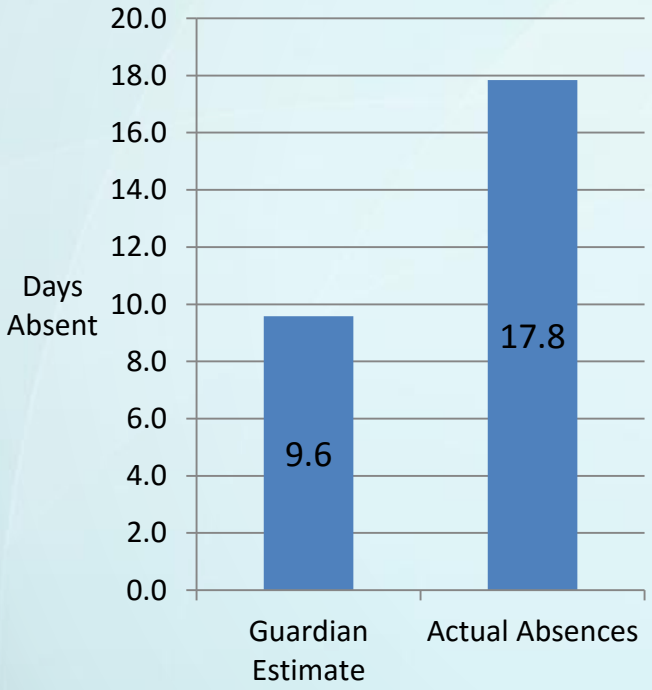
- **Promote a sense of belonging and connection** including noticing when students show up
- **Make learning engaging** and center school discipline around restorative practice not punishment
- **Help our most economically challenged families** and students meet their basic needs so all have the opportunity to get to school.
- **Build awareness among students and parents** about how absences can easily add up to too much time lost in the classroom.
- **Provide parents with on-going information** about their child's absences in supportive and positive manner
- **Stop engaging in school practices** that discourage attendance

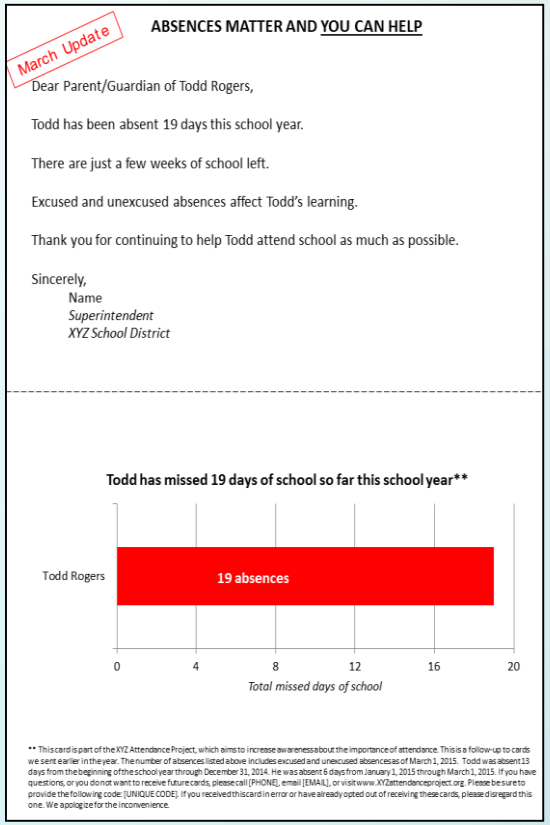


http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/schools/teaching-attendance-toolkit/

Correcting Key Beliefs Reduces Absences

Parents of High Absence Students Under-Estimate (by a Factor of 2)
How Many Days Their Students Have Been Absent





March Update

ABSENCES MATTER AND YOU CAN HELP

Dear Parent/Guardian of Todd Rogers,

Todd has been absent 19 days this school year.

There are just a few weeks of school left.

Excused and unexcused absences affect Todd's learning.

Thank you for continuing to help Todd attend school as much as possible.

Sincerely,
Name
Superintendent
XYZ School District

Todd has missed 19 days of school so far this school year**

Todd Rogers — 19 absences

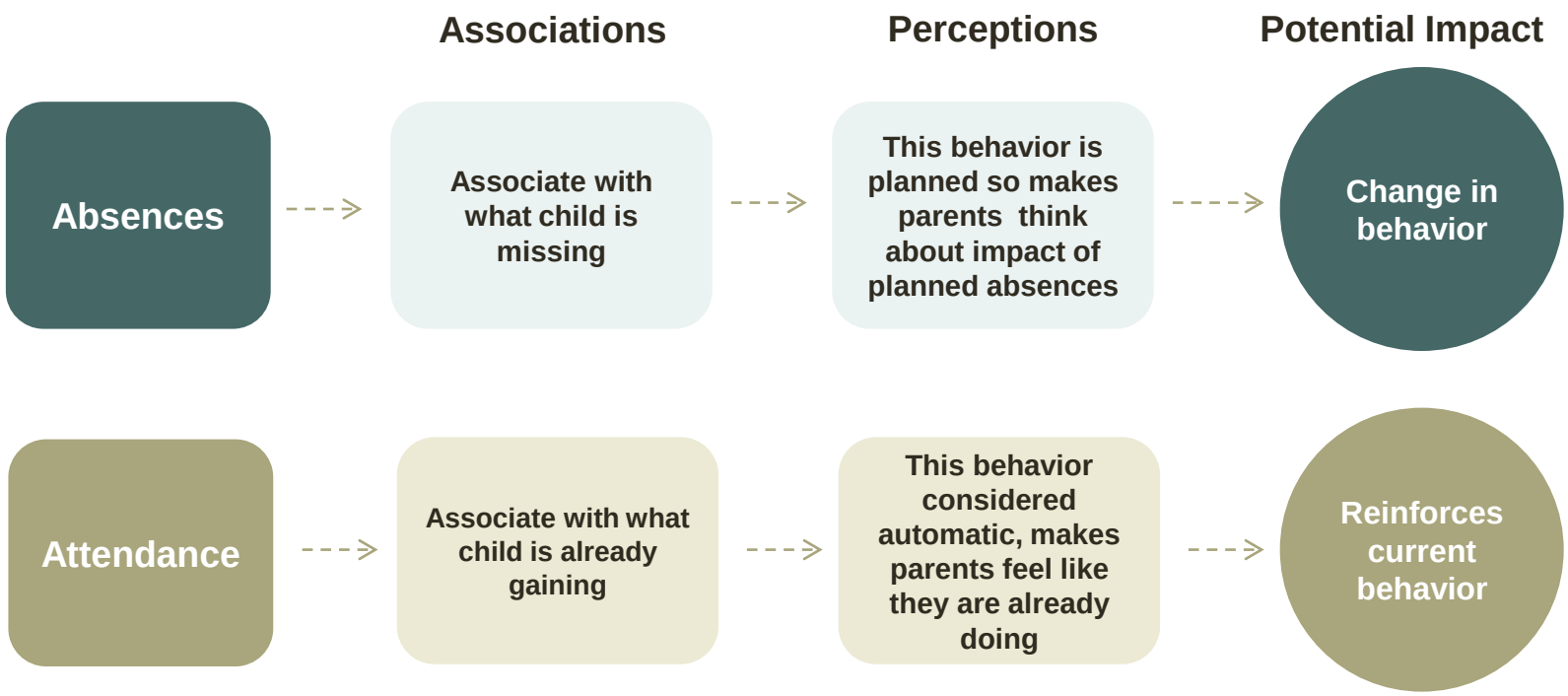
0 4 8 12 16 20

Total missed days of school

** This card is part of the XYZ Attendance Project, which aims to increase awareness about the importance of attendance. This is a follow-up to cards we sent earlier in the year. The number of absences listed above includes excused and unexcused absences as of March 1, 2015. Todd was absent 13 days from the beginning of the school year through December 31, 2014. He was absent 6 days from January 1, 2015 through March 1, 2015. If you have questions, or you do not want to receive future cards, please call [PHONE], email [EMAIL], or visit www.XYZattendanceproject.org. Please be sure to provide the following code: [UNIQUE CODE]. If you received this card in error or have already opted out of receiving these cards, please disregard this one. We apologize for the inconvenience.

Randomized experiment (N=34,000+, 4 conditions) reduced absences @ ~$6 per incremental day led by Professor Todd Rogers (Harvard Kennedy School); www.studentsocialsupport.org

Messaging: Absences v. Attendance



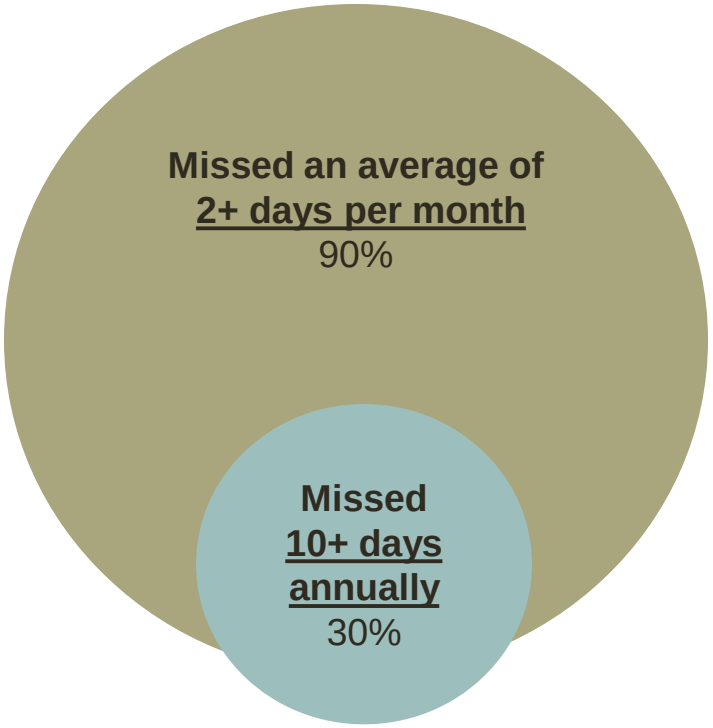
Ad Council – CA Attorney General, Reducing Chronic Absence by Informing Parents (Sept. 2015)
For more info see: http://www.attendanceworks.org/policy-advocacy/state-reports/california/

Parents Underestimate the Number of Year-End Absences

We asked each parent about his or her child's absences in two ways:

1. Was your child absent an average of 2 or more days a month?
2. Was your child absent more than 10 days over the year?

60% of parents said their child was absent an average of 2+ days a month, **but not** 10+ days a year



The math: If a child is absent an average of 2+ days a month, then she is absent far more than 10+ days a year

4

Schools Inadvertently Reinforce Some Absence-Causing Beliefs

School Behaviors that…

Reinforce Attendance

Class rewards for good attendance (e.g. popcorn or ice cream parties)

Individual recognition for students with good attendance

Big motivators for kids, but not parents

Reinforce Absenteeism

- Impersonal letters
- Teachers send work home in response to absences
- Teachers do not address absenteeism issue with the parent
- Parents do not feel their child is safe in school
- High levels of absenteeism in the class

Reinforces parents' existing attitudes and behaviors toward absences

Impersonal Letters:

- Easy to disregard
- Many parents felt the school miscounted—but parents couldn't verify because they weren't tracking absences
- Many parents felt that the school didn't understand them

Sending Work Home:

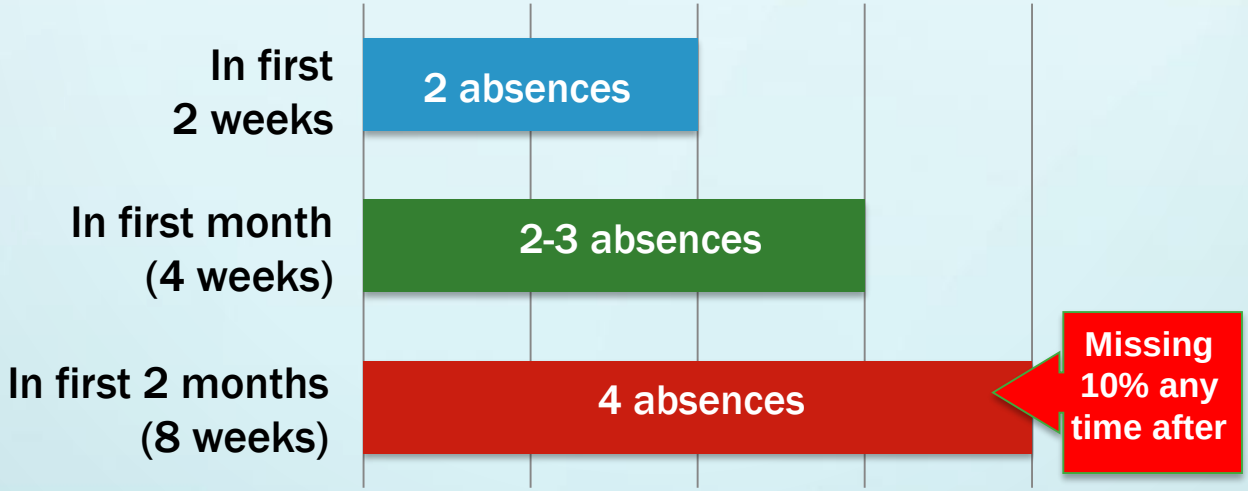
- Parents thought that completing a makeup packet caught their child up for the missed day's work

Teachers Not Addressing Absenteeism:

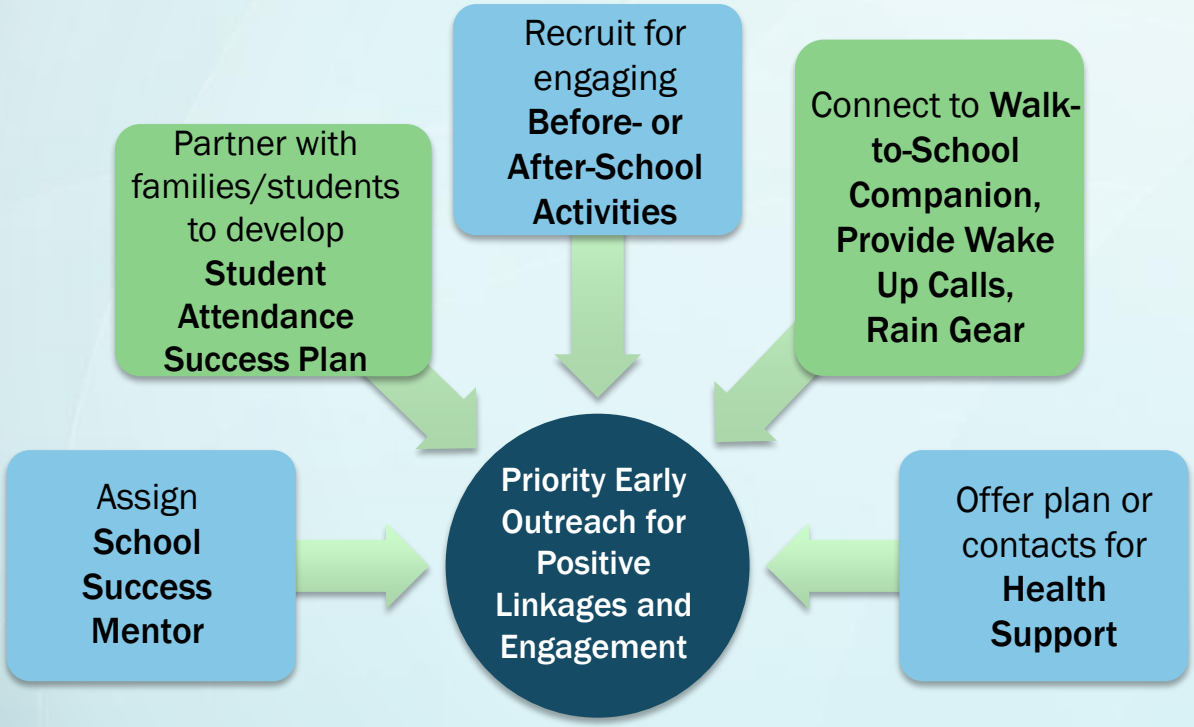
- Most parents reported that they regularly communicate with their children's teacher, but never about absences

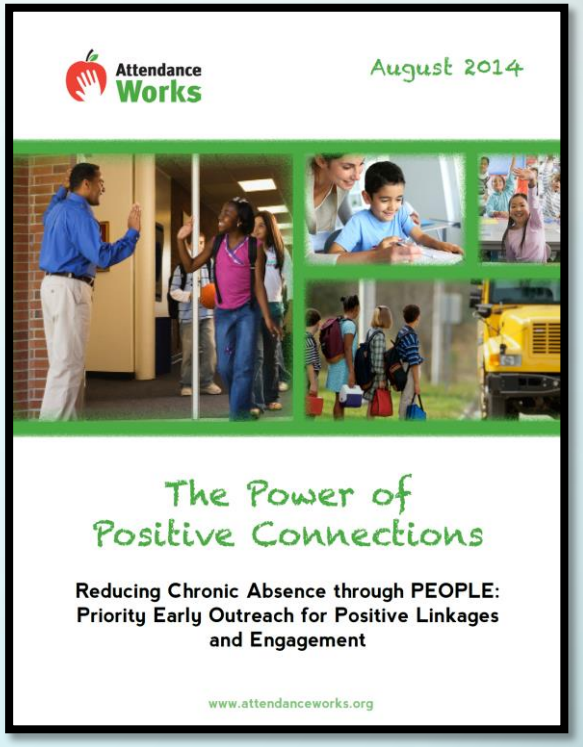
Tier 2: Criteria for Identifying Which Students Need It

- Chronic absence (missed 10% or more of school) in the prior year, assuming data is available.
- And/or starting in the beginning of the school year, student has:



Examples of Tier 2 Interventions



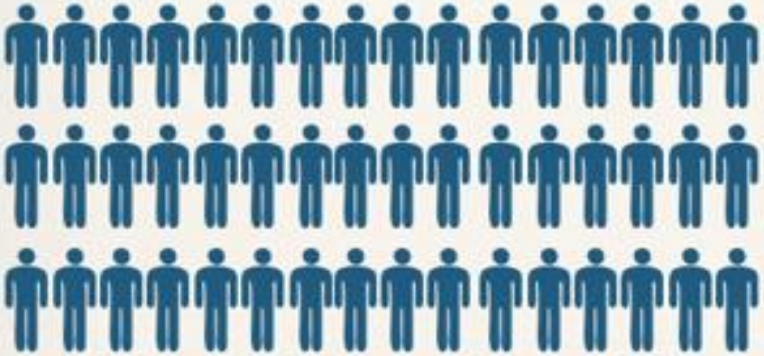


http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/schools/power-positive-connections-toolkit/

NYC Success Mentor Corps

200 Success Mentors

reaching



Over 2,000 At-Risk Students

Three Models:

- **External:** City Year, ReServe, Social Work Students
- **Internal:** Department of Education Staff
- **High School Seniors**

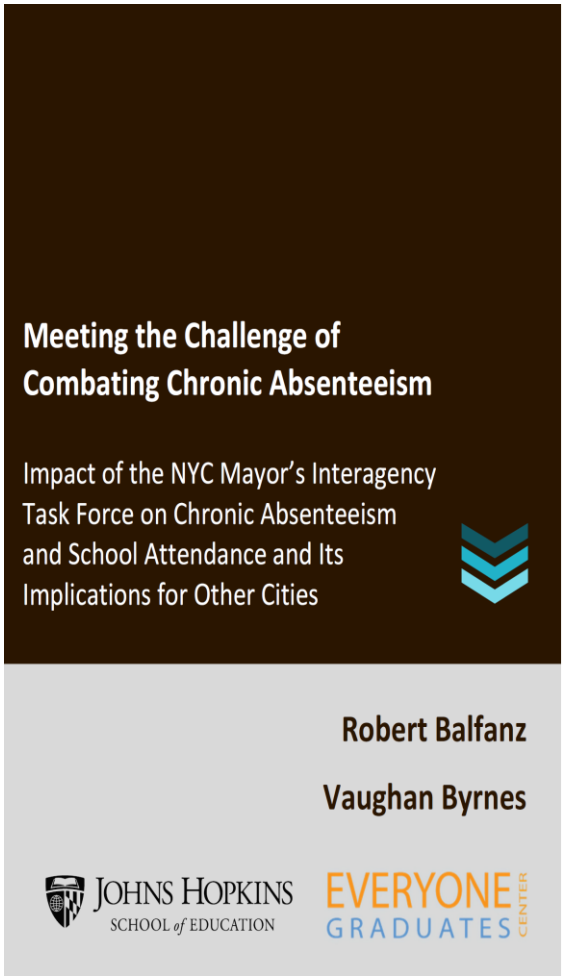
- ✓ Full year, 3-5 days/week, 15 hour min.
- ✓ Trainings & check-ins
- ✓ Confidentiality agreements
- ✓ Weekly Principal Meetings
- ✓ Connections to services
- ✓ Data Dashboard

Weekly Student Success Summits

GOAL = STRATEGIC COLLABORATION FOR IMPROVED OUTCOMES

Key Finding: Success Mentors & Supporting Infrastructure Substantially Improved Student Attendance

- Students with prior histories of chronic absenteeism with a Success Mentor gained nearly two additional weeks of school (9 days), which is educationally significant.
- In the top 25% of schools, students with Success Mentors gained one additional month of school.
- High School students with Success Mentors (including those overage for their grade) were 52% more likely to remain in school the following year.
- Mentees reported they liked having a mentor and the mentor helped improve their attendance, schoolwork, motivation, and confidence.



http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-works/new-york-city/success-mentors/

EVERY STUDENT,
EVERY DAY

How Can States, Districts, and Communities Take a Comprehensive Approach?

Step 1: Measure and Analyze

- School District/State should measure and publish school-level chronic absenteeism rates
- Schools with high rates should track on weekly basis
- Determine how many students are not attending because of barriers, avoidance, and disengagement. Use student surveys, focus groups, and attendance census days (i.e. on a given day establish reason for every absence).

Tailor Response to Scale and Intensity of the Challenge

- At the District Level: is there a need for a community-wide response or targeted efforts in a sub-set of schools?
- At the School Level: how many students are chronically absent?
- If it's 30 or less, a student support team can lead the effort.
- If it's closer to 50 or more, teachers will need to play a critical role.
- If it's over 100, community partners will likely be needed to provide additional person power
- In all cases, investments in mission building, professional development, coaching and networking are critical to success.

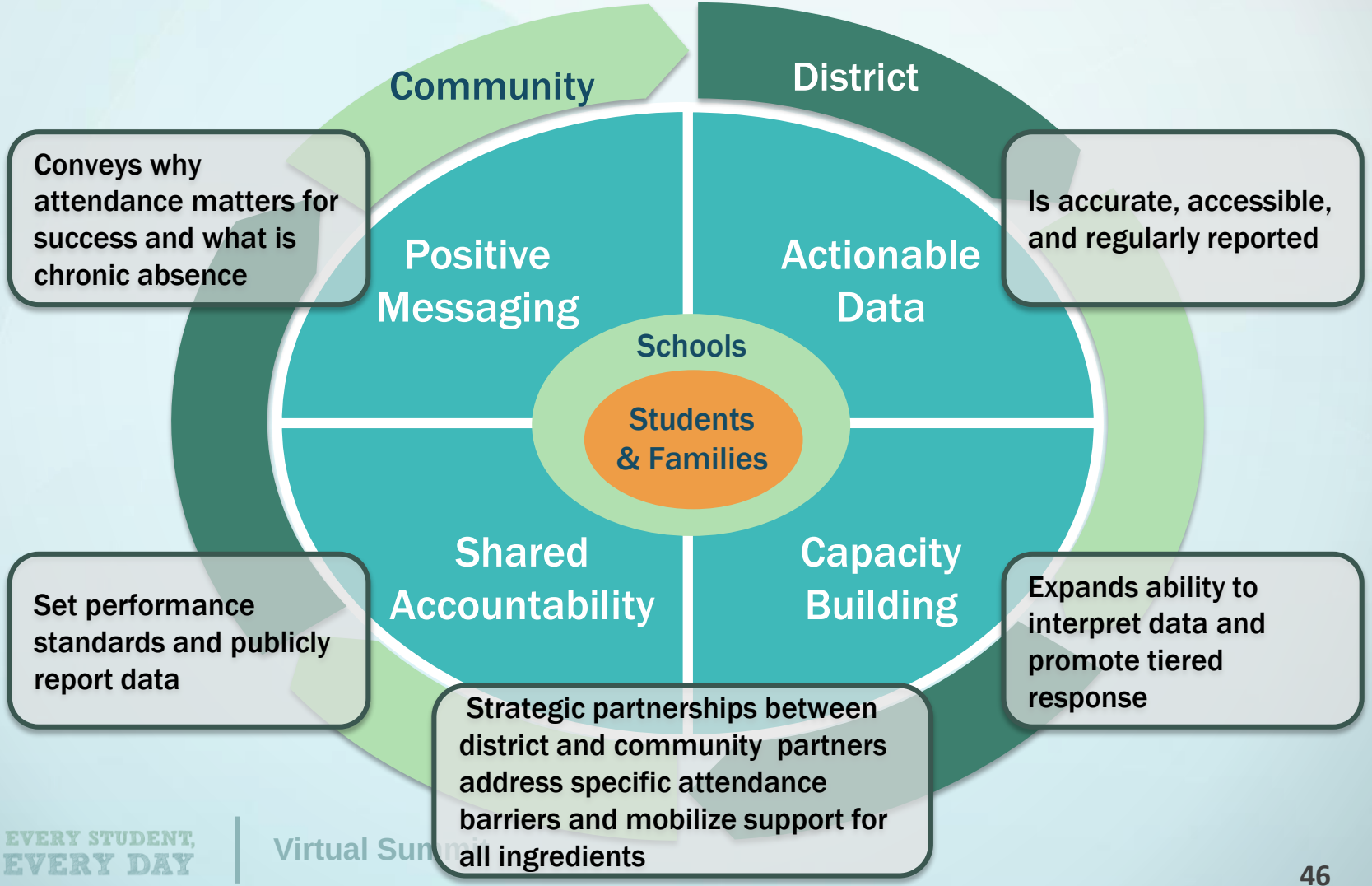
Step 2: Monitor

- Facilitate the spread of early warning systems at state and school district level
- Schools with high levels of chronic absenteeism should use early warning systems and monitor weekly
- Identify students with prior history of chronic absenteeism for close monitoring and rapid action at start of year.
- Also pay attention to students with no prior history of chronic absenteeism that suddenly start to trend towards it.

Step 3: Act

- Create welcoming environment in schools and send message to students that they are wanted in school everyday and that everyday matters
- Implement a multi-tiered response that combines prevention, with additional supports targeted at groups of students, and case-managed assistance for highest needs students
- In highly impacted schools principals should lead weekly student success meetings to understand attendance trends and analyze success of interventions at school and individual level
- Establish success mentors who can form supportive relationships with chronically absent students to help solve their problems or change their behavior and monitor their attendance on a weekly basis
- Make implementing a comprehensive plan combating absenteeism a part of required activities in school improvement efforts
- Establish Inter-agency efforts at state and local level led by Governors and Mayors

Ingredients for System-wide Success & Sustainability

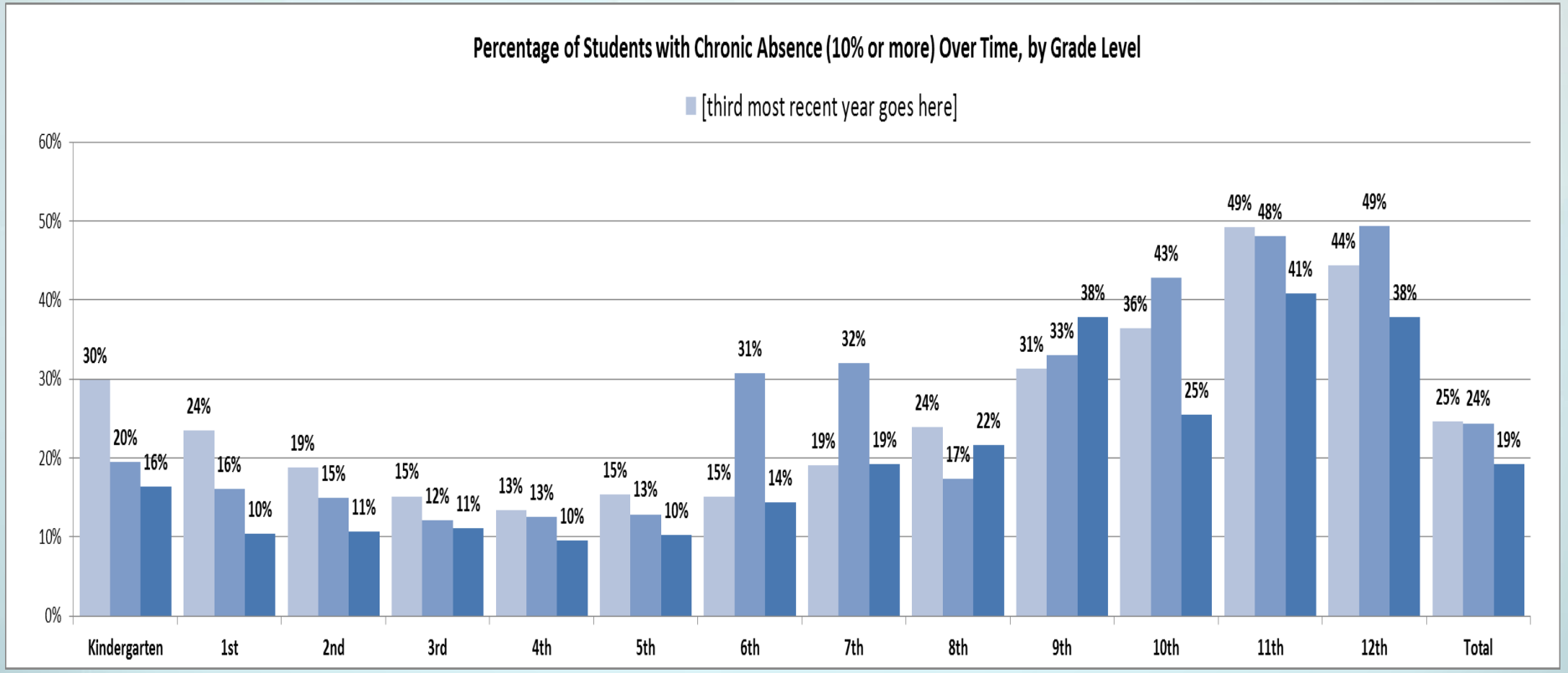


New Britain, Connecticut

- **Professional development:** trained site administrators and teams to interpret attendance data, adopt best practices and engage in peer learning.
- **Actionable data:** sent report every 10 days with information on how many and which students are chronically absent
- **School attendance teams:** monitored the data and ensured appropriate support s are in place.
- **Home visits:** hired two outreach workers to conduct home visits to chronically absent kindergartners.
- **Parent engagement and communications:** Messaged thru newsletters, daily interactions with parents & attendance incentives.
- **Community partnerships:** used community agencies to offer supports at school sites and thru a district Attendance Review Committee formed to avoid referrals to juvenile court.

In New Britain, Chronic Absence Dropped from 20% to 13% for K-8 in 2011- 12

Progress Sustained in Years 2012-13 and 2013-14

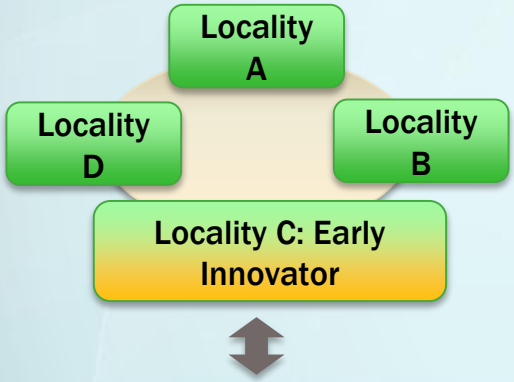


Scaling Up: Proposed Local to State Pathway

Advance local practice through peer learning

Inform state organizations with insights from local practice

Spread work state-wide through TA and policy



Peer opportunities to compare data, share & learn about best practices, and identify and problem-solve common challenges

- State Dept of Education
- State Policy Makers
- Education Associations
- Unions (teachers, admin., etc.)
- Parent Organizations
- Advocacy Organizations
- ECE/HS Association
- Others

Ongoing peer learning, TA, administrative guidance, regulations, and legislation promote best practices & systemic change

Requires Multi-Sector Responses

Promising examples include:

- Every Student, Every Day "Dear Colleague" letter from four Cabinet Secretaries sent to Chief State School Officers.
- Schools and health providers work together to address chronic illness and un-met health needs that keep kids from attending schools through data sharing, co-location, school based health clinics, mobile health and dentistry vans etc. (Models throughout the USA)
- Courts adopt a prevention/problem solving vs punitive approach to reducing truancy (i.e. San Antonio, TX and Alameda County, CA)
- Homeless shelters (NYC) and housing authorities (Sarasota, FL and San Francisco, CA) share attendance data and work together to offer supports for getting to school.

Today's Panelists

Chris Caruso

Executive Director

Office of Community Schools
NYC Dept. of Education

Teresa Neal

Superintendent

Grand Rapids Public Schools

Mike Herrmann

Executive Director

Healthy, Safe and Supportive Schools, Tennessee State Department of Education

Chris Caruso, Executive Director
www.nyc.gov/communityschools

The Challenge

Students can be *chronically absent*, meaning they miss

20 DAYS OR MORE

of school and still have an 89% attendance rate. Being *severely chronically absent* - **missing 38 days or more** of school - still results in a 79% attendance rate.

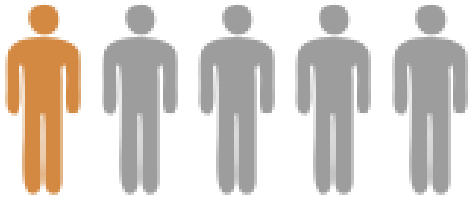
3 OUT OF 4

students who are chronically absent in the **sixth grade** never graduate from high school.

15% of NYC elementary school students

34% of NYC high school students

→ **missed one month** of school or more in the 2009-2010 academic year.



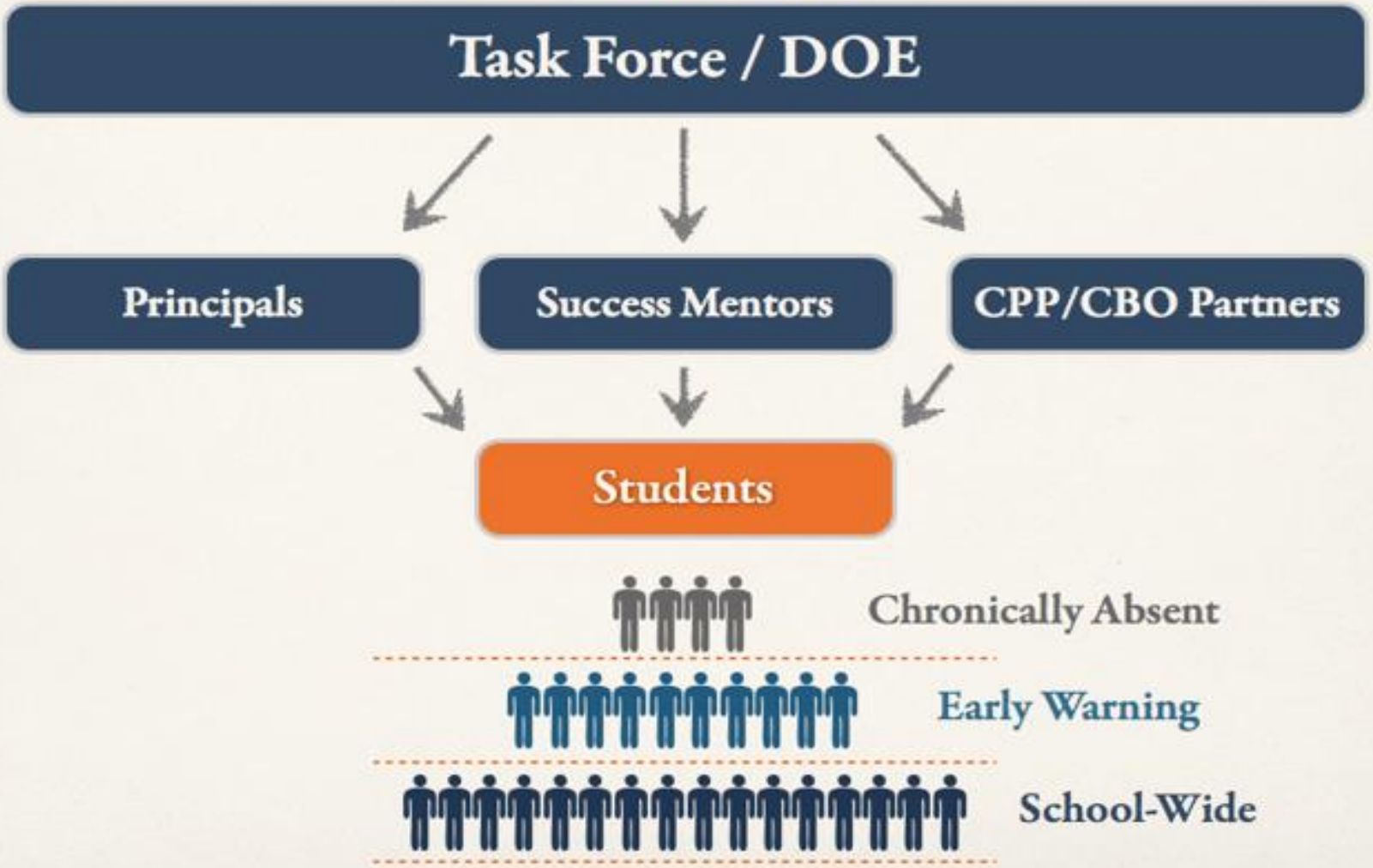
200,000 NYC public school students **- roughly 1 out of 5 -** were chronically absent last year

79% of NYC children in the juvenile justice system have records of chronic absenteeism; and half, approximately 40 percent, were severely chronically absent.

66% of NYC students with ACS cases are chonically absent or severely chronically absent.

Multi-Tiered Approach to Reduce Absenteeism

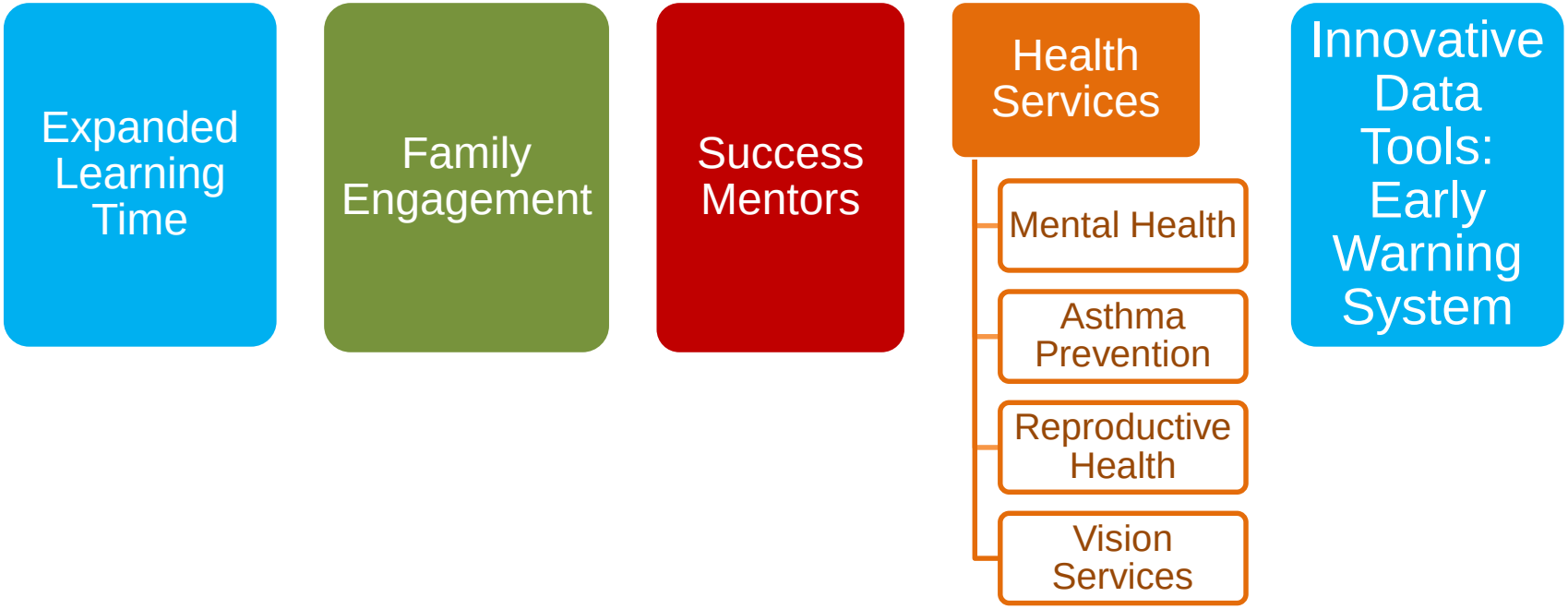
2010-2013



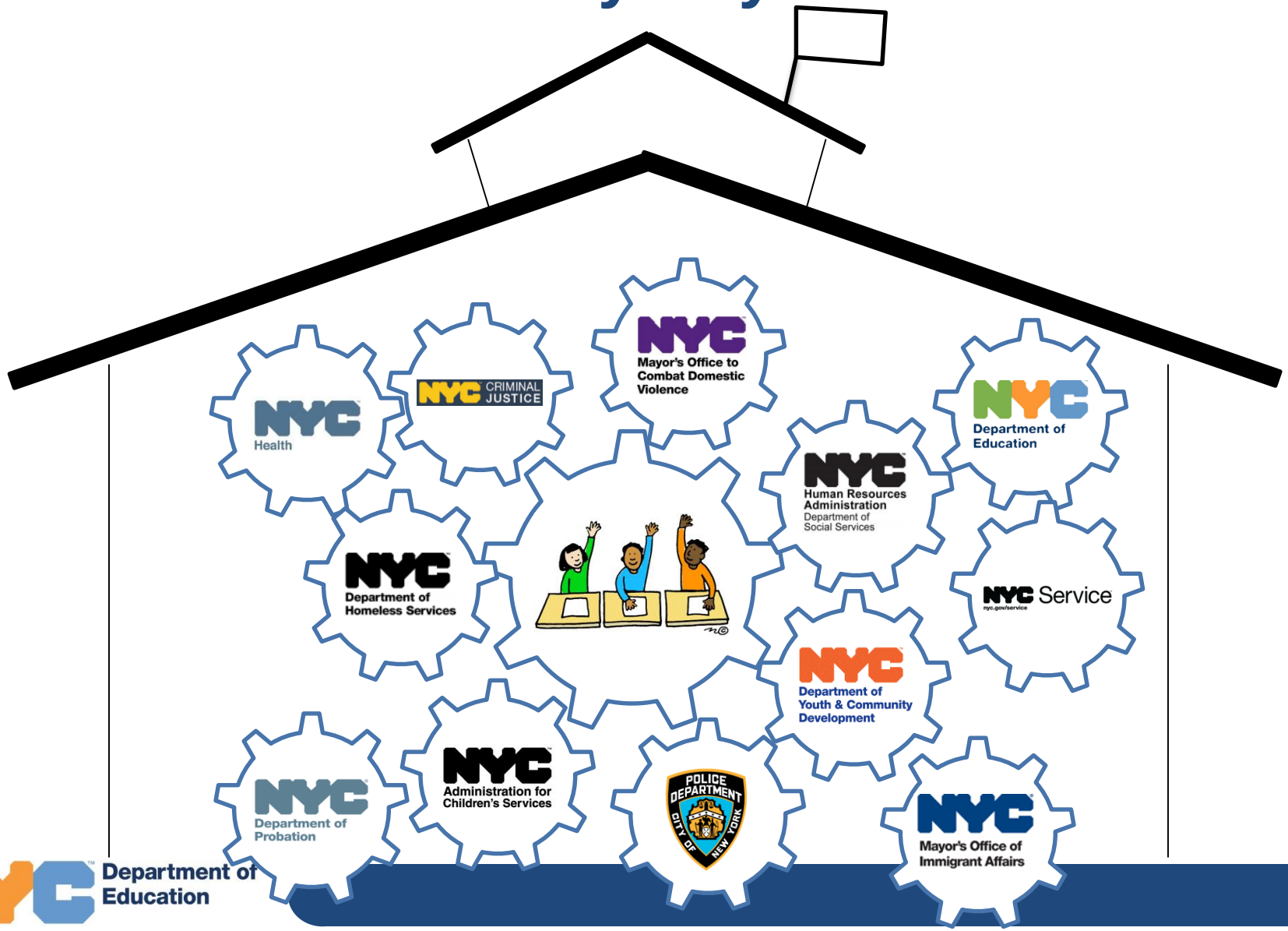
Community Schools: Centers of Opportunity

- Represent a strategy to organize resources and share leadership so that academics, social services and supports are integrated into the fabric of schools to help them better serve the needs of families.
- Align resources with vision and purpose resulting in improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities.

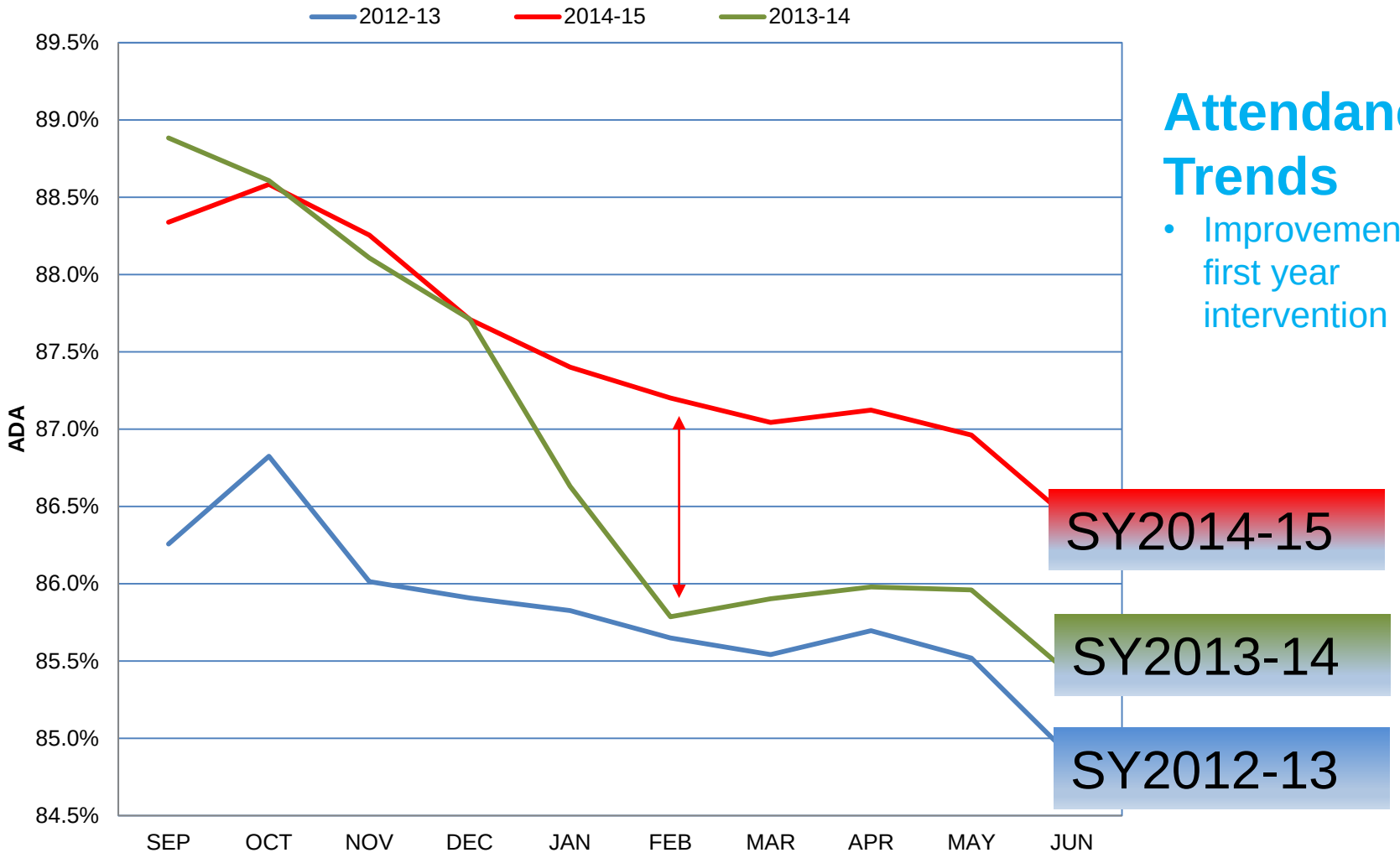
Examples of Community School Resources for Every School



Community Schools, Organizing Around Student Success Every Day



Student Performance Indicators from Year One Encouraging



Attendance Trends

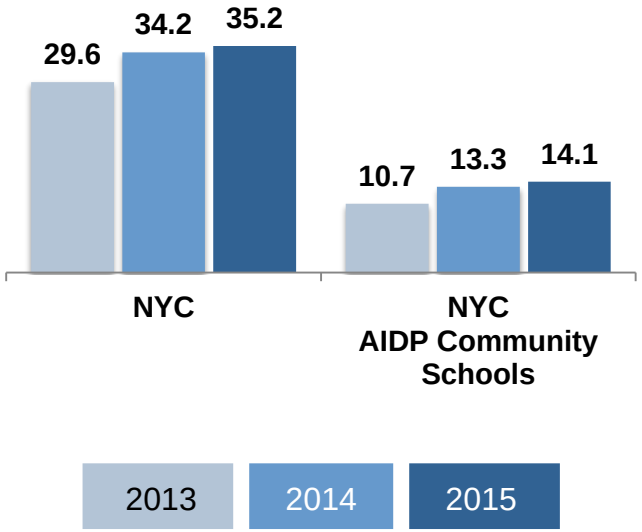
- Improvement after first year intervention

Student Performance Indicators from Year One Encouraging

Grades 3-8 Math

Percentage Point and Percent Change from 2014 to 2015

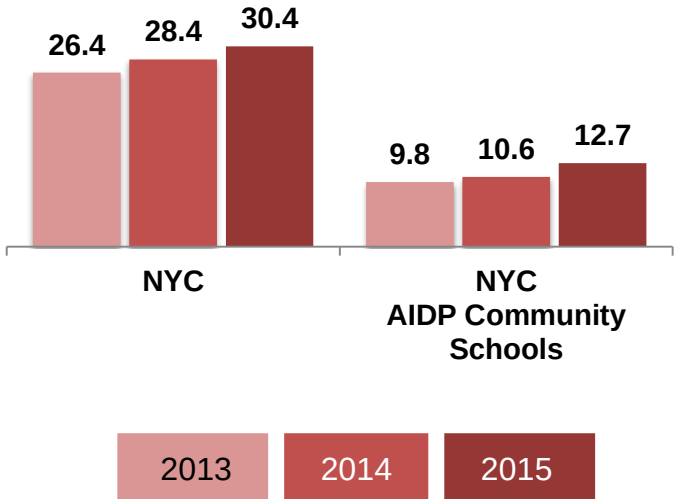
NYC	AIDP Schools
+1.0 pts	+0.8 pts
+2.9%	+6.2%



Grades 3-8 English

Percentage Point and Percent Change from 2014 to 2015

NYC	AIDP Schools
+2.0 pts	+2.1 pts
+6.9%	+19.3%



Numbers may not sum due to rounding. Data includes 45 schools that received funding as part of an Attendance Improvement and Dropout Prevention grant, 11 of which are also Renewal Schools.

Takeaways

- 90% average daily attendance is **NOT** good enough.
- Build a **success mentor corps** for the chronically absent.
- Use the school's **chronic absenteeism rate** as a data point to better understand students' academic outcomes and track progress.
- Connect students to resources in-school and beyond and coordinate for impact to ensure the **right students are assigned to the right services at the right time.**

ABOUT THE DISTRICT
GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

5TH LARGEST SCHOOL DISTRICT IN MICHIGAN

- 16,500+ students
- 82% free/reduced lunch
- 24% special education
- 25% English language learners
- 33% African American
  37% Hispanic
  23% Caucasian

52 SCHOOLS

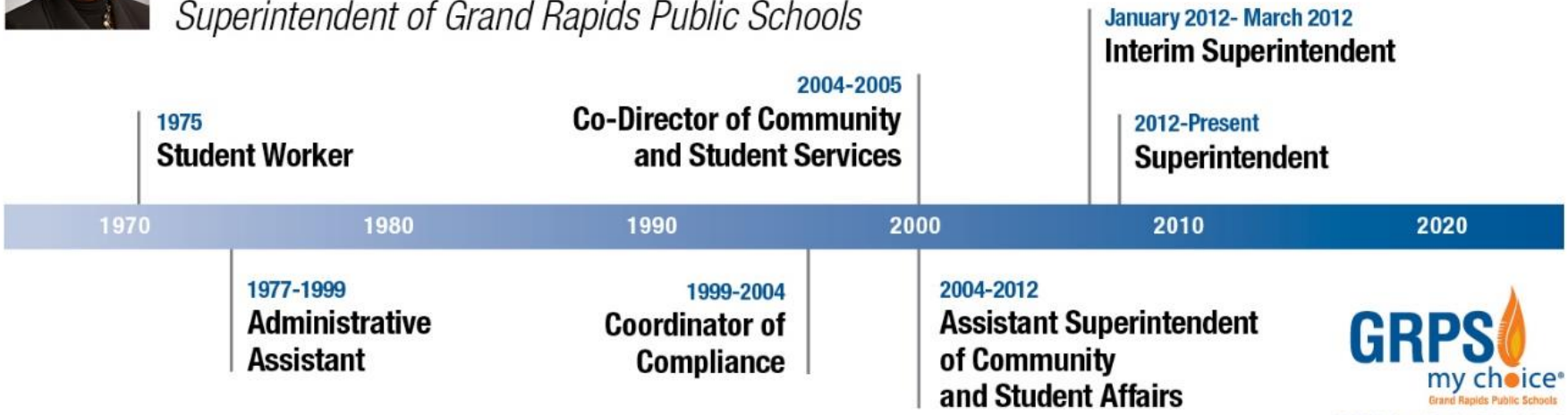
3RD LARGEST EMPLOYER IN GRAND RAPIDS

- 2,700+ employees *(1,400 teachers)*

A LEADER WITH 40 YEARS INVESTED IN GRPS

Teresa Weatherall Neal, M. Ed.

Superintendent of Grand Rapids Public Schools



GRPS my choice
Grand Rapids Public Schools

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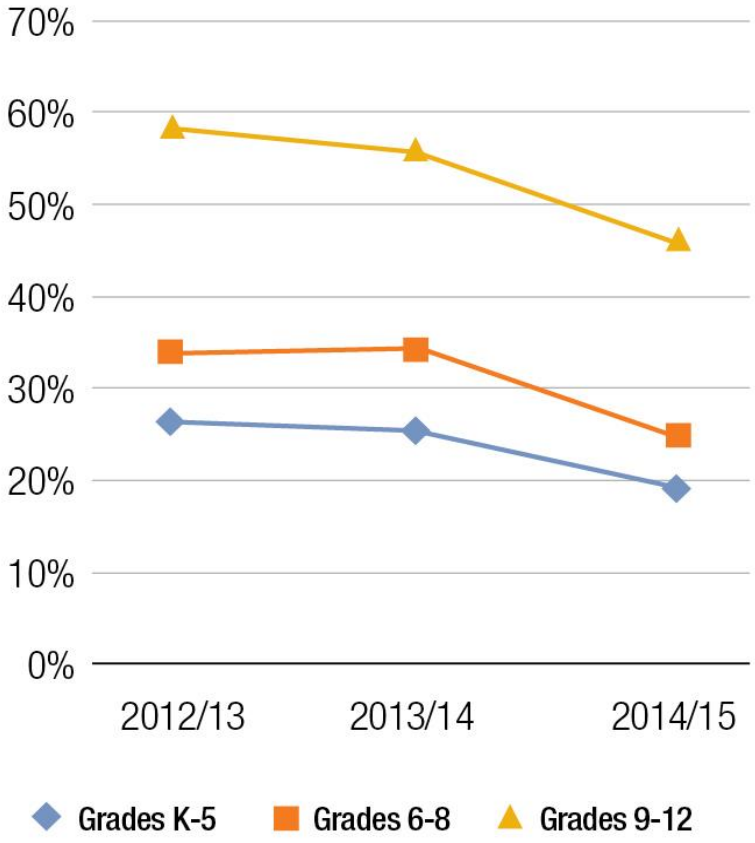
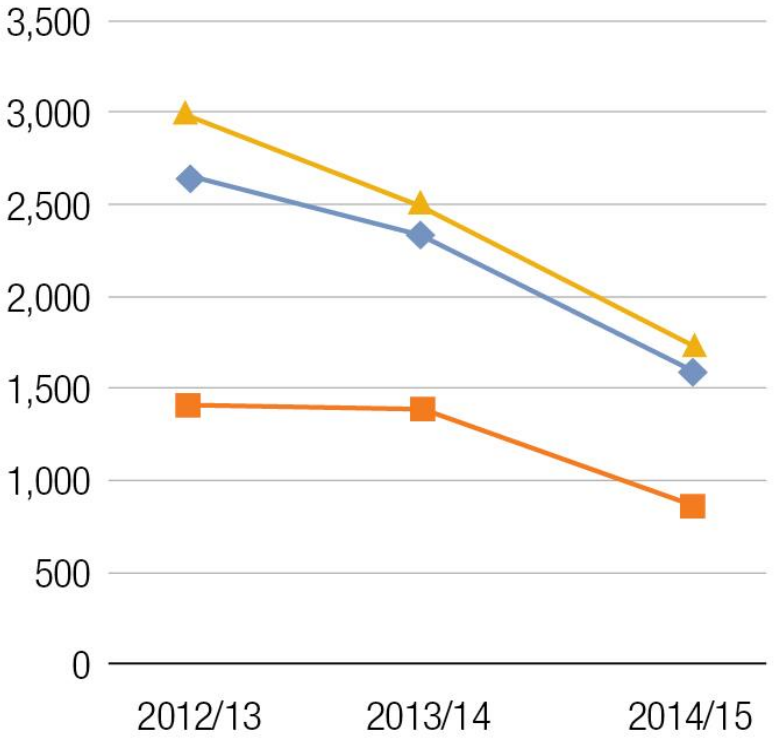
THREE-YEAR COMPARISON
CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM OVER TIME

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS, BY LEVEL



NUMBER OF STUDENTS, BY LEVEL



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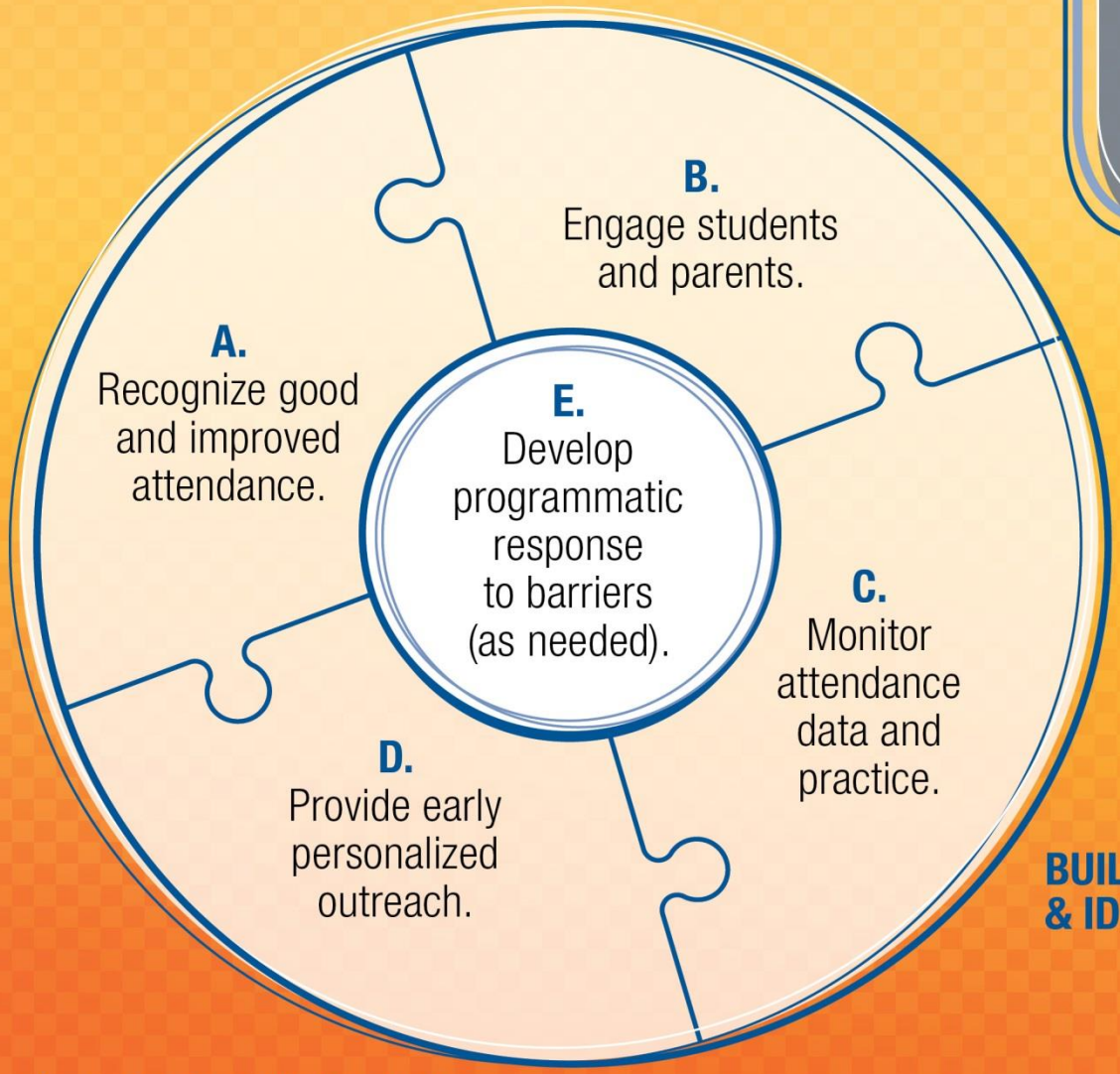
UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES



BUILDING A CULTURE OF ATTENDANCE & IDENTIFYING BARRIERS

Source: Hedy Chang, Attendance Works

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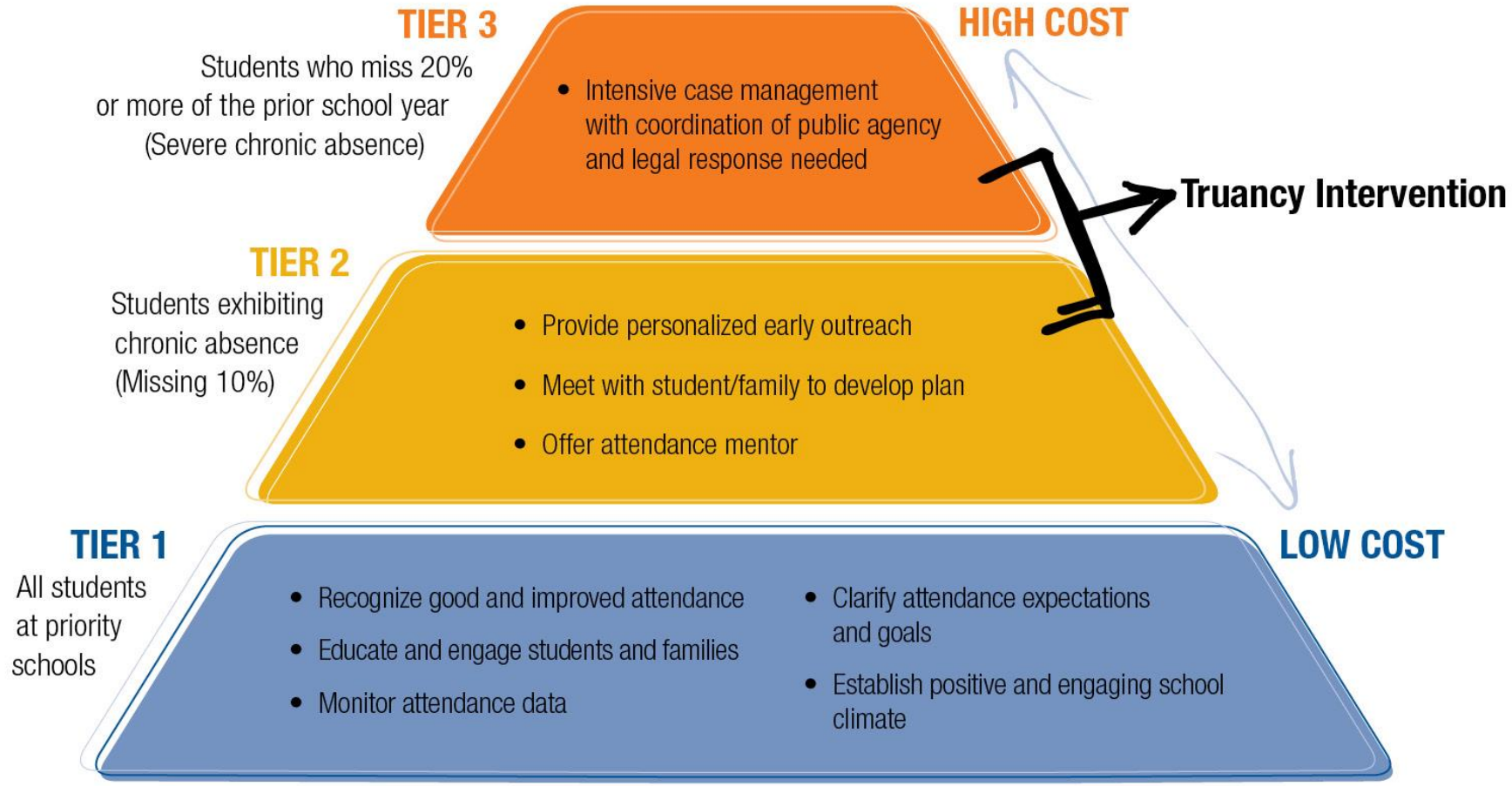
TIERED APPROACH
BEGIN WITH PREVENTION



Source: Hedy Chang, Attendance Works

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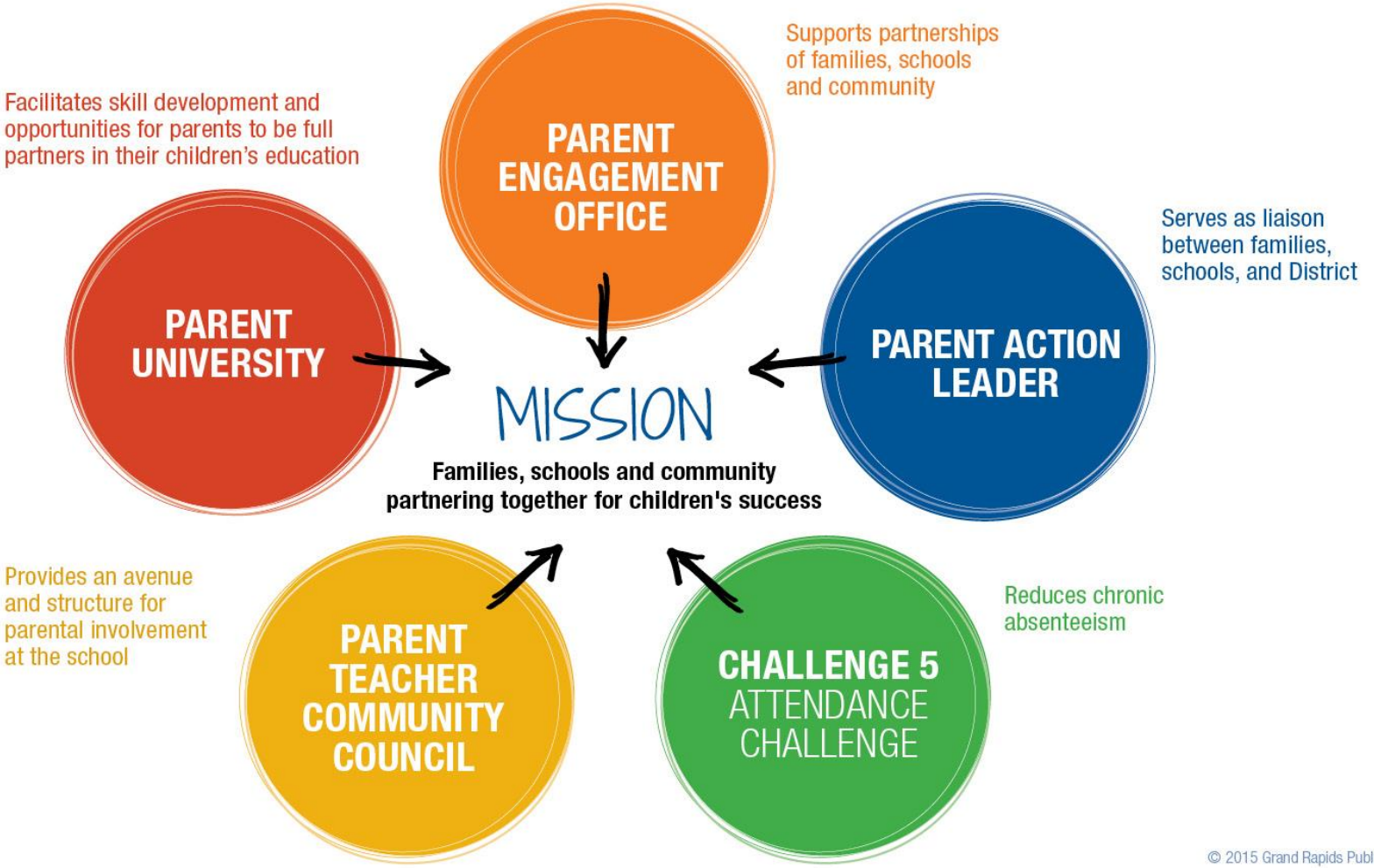
PARENT ENGAGEMENT
PARTNERING TOGETHER



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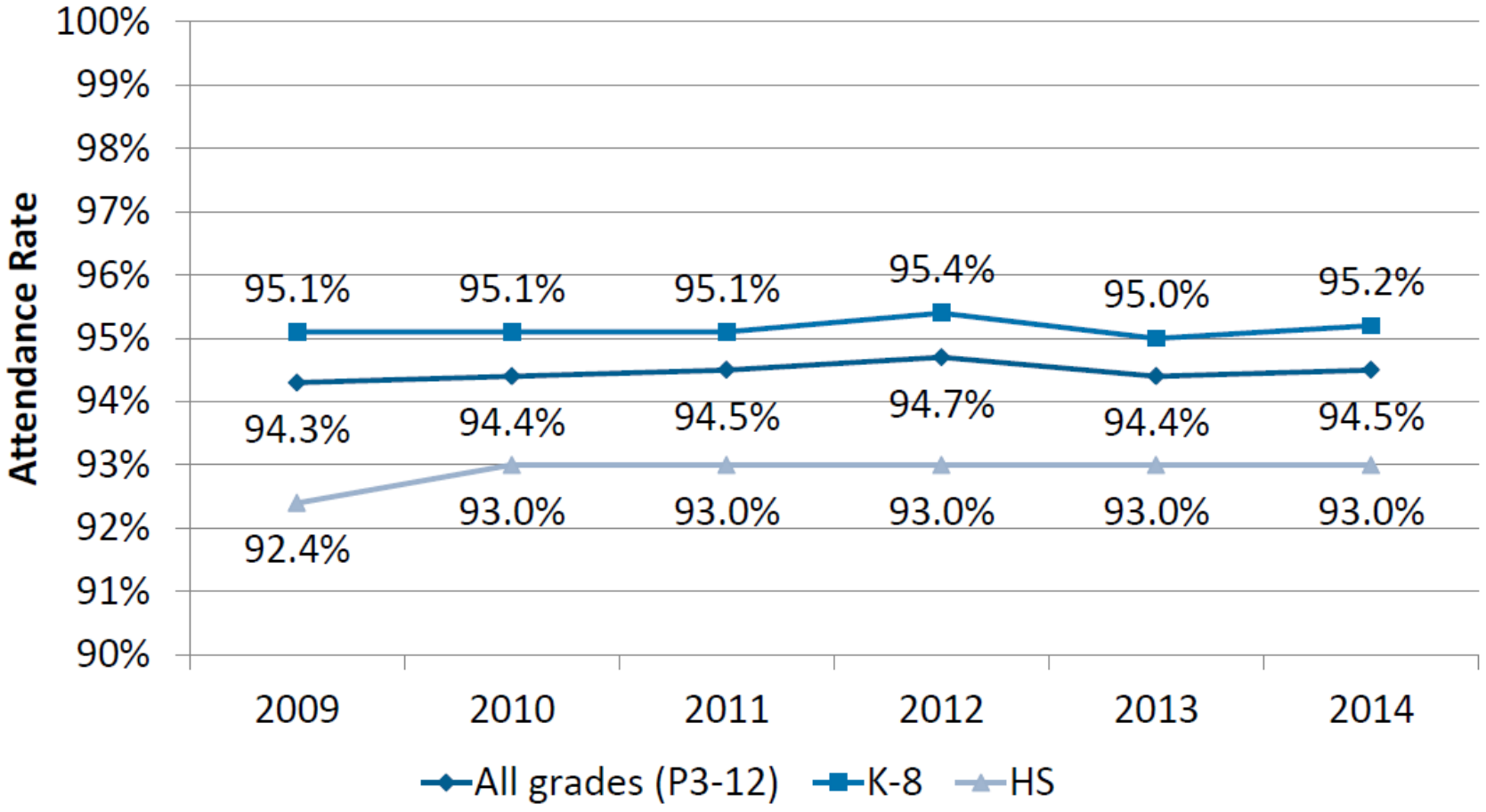
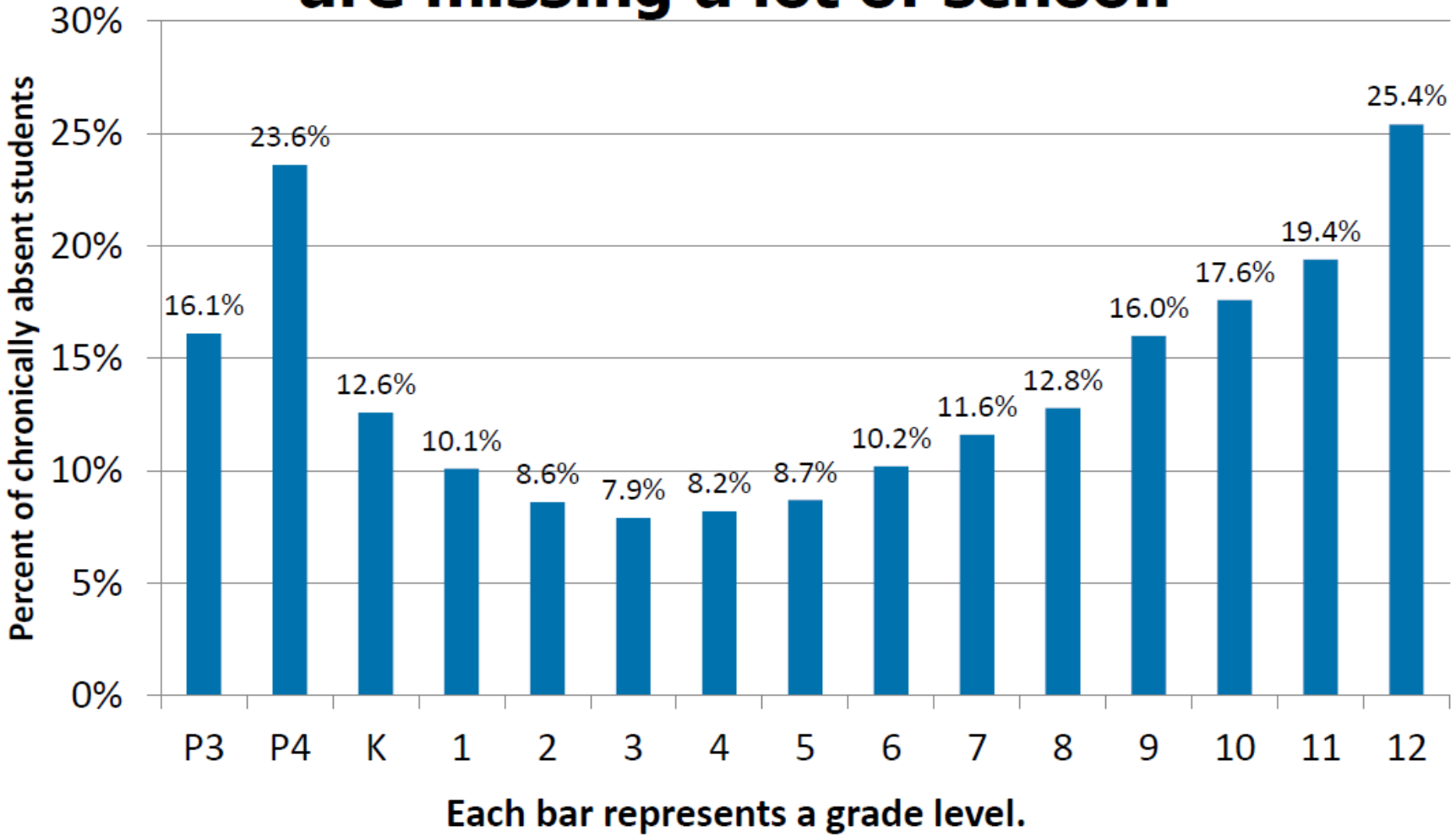
Chronic Absenteeism in Tennessee Schools

Mike Herrmann
Executive Director
Healthy, Safe and Supportive Schools

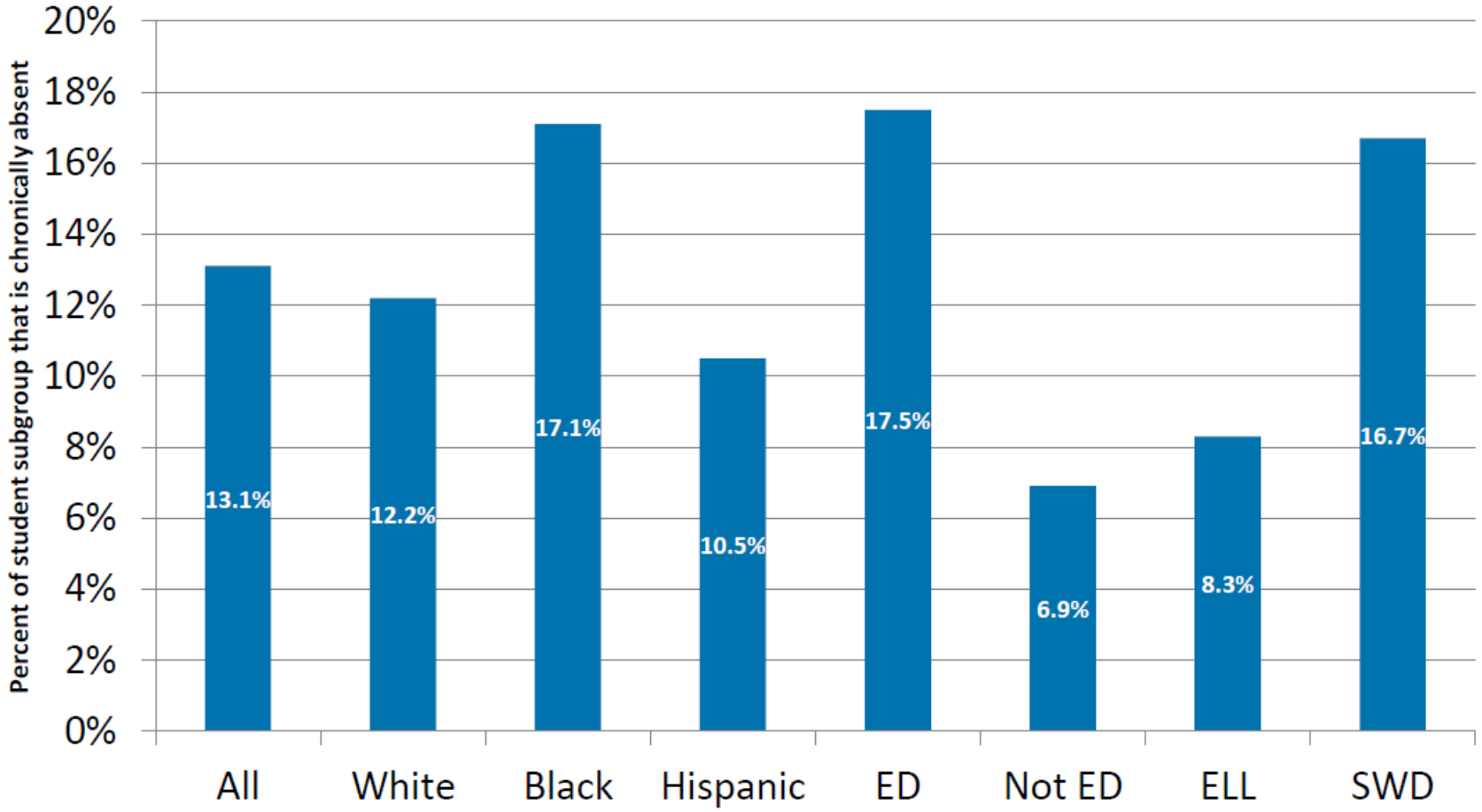
Attendance has been stable across the last six school years.



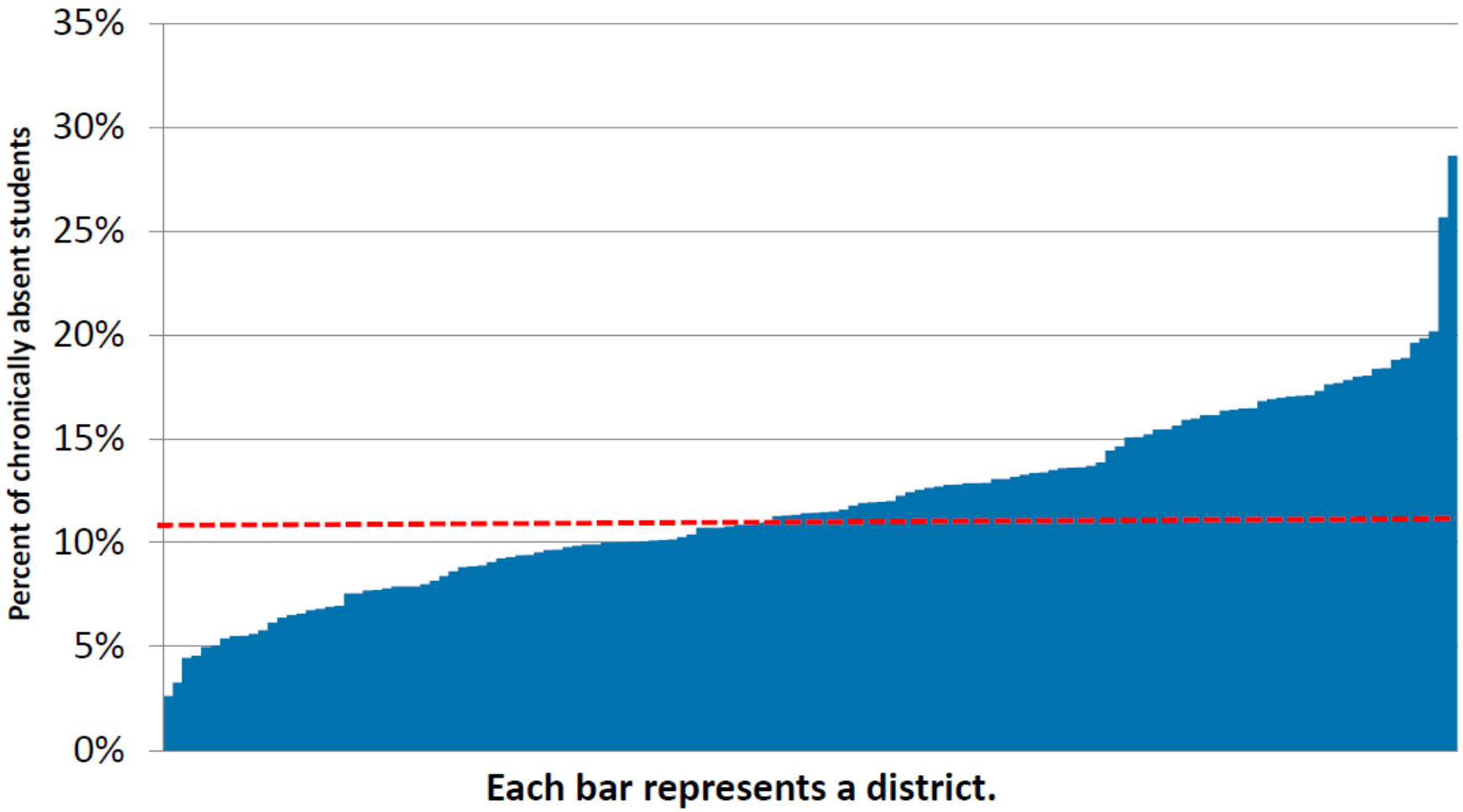
However, the attendance rate hides the fact that some students are missing a lot of school.



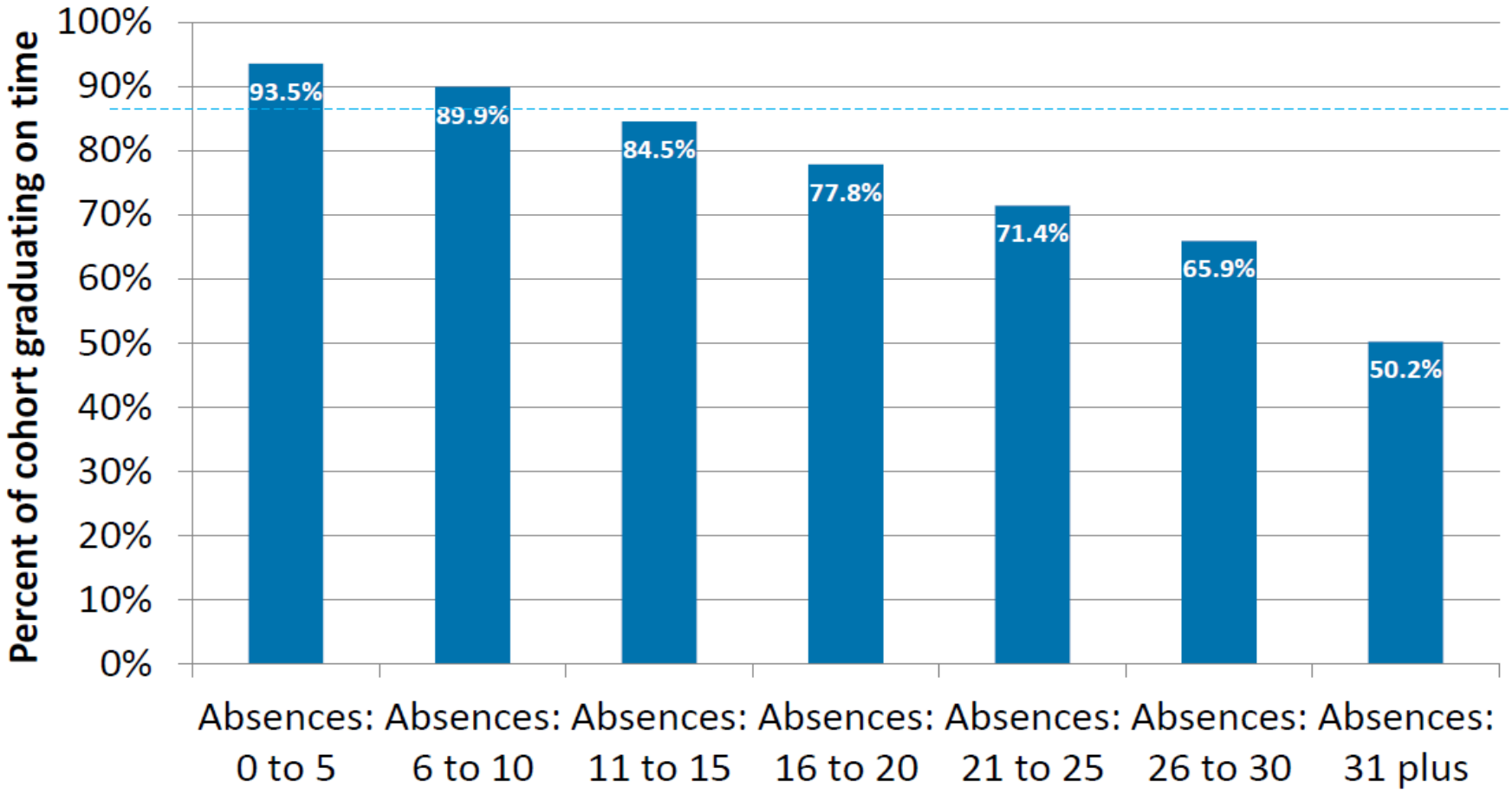
Some student subgroups are overrepresented in the chronically absent student population.



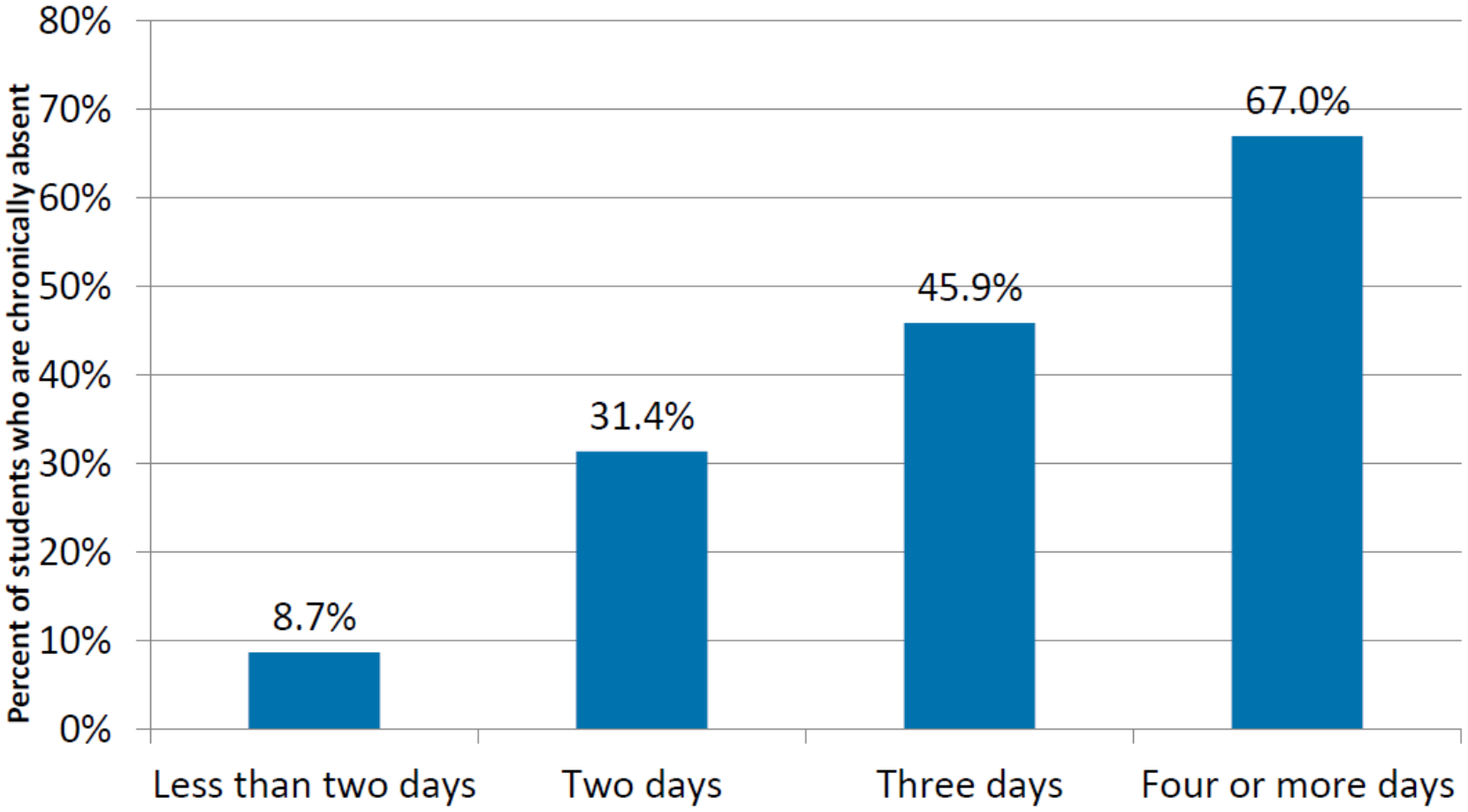
The percent of chronically absent students differs substantially across districts.



As absences increase in freshman year, the likelihood that a student will graduate on time decreases.



Students missing two or more days in August are five times as likely as their peers to be chronically absent.



Our strategy

- Review data
- Insure supports are in place
- Align with state priorities
- Identify local models
- Engage partners
- Raise awareness

Discussion Question

How are you developing the interagency partnerships to address the most serious attendance challenges?

What is most essential?

Questions?

EVERY STUDENT,
EVERY DAY

Announcements

ED Calls on States, School Districts, and Communities to Join *Every Student, Every Day*

- Through the remainder of President Obama's term, the White House and ED are placing a high priority on raising awareness about and supporting action to combat chronic absenteeism.

- Stay tuned for upcoming announcements on ED's plans to support state and local efforts to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism, including opportunities for practical technical assistance and the upcoming national chronic absenteeism summit in spring 2016.

- You can find more information at our ED.gov webpage on *Every Student, Every Day*: http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/index.html

The Superintendents Call to Action

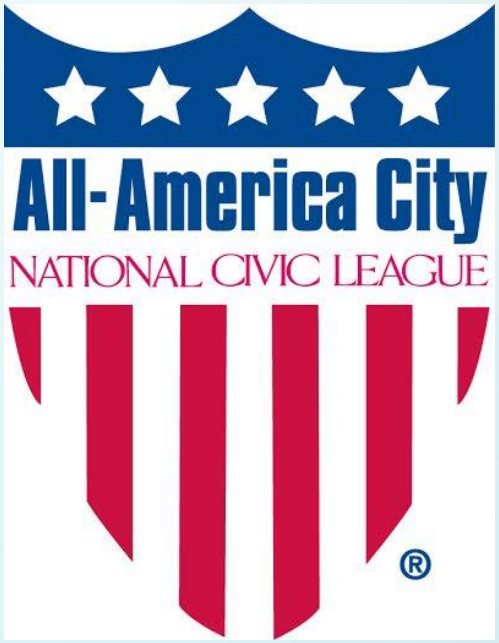
To sign-up for the Call to Action, or to learn more, please visit: www.attendanceworks.org/superintendents-call-to-action

Attendance Works Holiday Messaging

http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-public-messaging/holiday-messaging

All-America City Award

- The 2016 All-America City Award will go to cities working to "ensure the health and success of students in school and life."
- Attendance initiatives fit that definition
- Apply by March 9, 2016



www.nationalcivicleague.org/apply-for-the-2016-all-america-city-award/

Thank You for Attending!

- A recording of today's Virtual Summit will be posted within 72 hours:
  http://www.attendanceworks.org/peer-learning-resources/

- Please take a moment to provide feedback about today's webinar:
  https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Nov12-Virtual-Summit

Informal Questions?